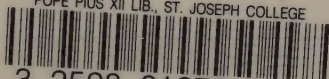




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**BLAKE'S INNOCENCE
AND EXPERIENCE**

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AND FOUR FACSIMILES IN COLOUR

BLAKE'S INNOCENCE AND EXPERIENCE

A STUDY OF THE SONGS AND MANUSCRIPTS
"SHEWING THE TWO CONTRARY STATES OF THE HUMAN SOUL"

BY

JOSEPH H. WICKSTEED, M.A.

AUTHOR OF "BLAKE'S VISION OF THE BOOK OF JOB"



"Joys impregnate. Sorrows bring forth"

LONDON & TORONTO: J. M. DENT & SONS LTD.

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MCMXXVIII

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TO THE MEMORY OF
MY FATHER
PHILIP HENRY WICKSTEED
WHO HEARING THE VOICES OF MANY MASTERS
IN MANY LANDS
HELD SPEECH THAT SHALL NOT PERISH
WITH HIS MANY FRIENDS
AND DISCIPLES
I DEDICATE
THIS STUDY OF THE MIND OF WILLIAM BLAKE
AND
TO MY WIFE I DEDICATE
THE JOY THAT I HAVE FOUND IN IT

‘JOY & WOE ARE WOVEN FINE
A CLOTHING FOR THE SOUL DIVINE’

CONTENTS

	PAGE
<i>Blake Dates</i>	11
<i>Expository Preface</i>	17

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

§ 1. The Songs and their Singer	55
§ 2. Vocabulary and Rhymes	62
§ 3. Blake's Spelling and Punctuation	67
§ 4. The Symbolism	69
§ 5. The Illustrations	72

PART I

SONGS OF INNOCENCE

Introduction ("The Piper")	79
--------------------------------------	----

SECTION I—THE PIPER PIPES

The Shepherd	85
The Ecchoing Green	87
Laughing Song	88
Spring	89

4 BLAKE'S INNOCENCE AND EXPERIENCE

SECTION II—SONGS OF TEARS AND JOY

	PAGE
The Lamb	91
A Dream	93
On Another's Sorrow	94
Nurse's Song	96
Night	97
A Cradle Song	99
The Divine Image	100

SECTION III—SONGS OF DAWNING THOUGHT

Holy Thursday	103
The Little Boy lost	105
The Little Boy found	105
The Chimney Sweeper	108
The Little Black Boy	111

SECTION IV—SONGS OF LOVE DAWN

The Little Girl Lost <i>and</i> The Little Girl Found	115
Infant Joy	122
The Blossom	125
The Voice of the Ancient Bard	130

EPILOGUE TO INNOCENCE

"Thel" and a Query	131
------------------------------	-----

PART II

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

	PAGE
"Experience"	139
Introduction ("The Bard")	145
Earth's Answer	147

SECTION I—SONGS OF THE HEART'S EXPERIENCE

{ My Pretty Rose Tree	149
{ Ah! Sun-flower	149
{ The Lilly	149
The Garden of Love	152
A Poison Tree	153
Nurse's Song	155
The Sick Rose	157
The Angel	158
A Little GIRL Lost	160

SECTION II—SONGS OF THE MIND'S EXPERIENCE

The Clod & the Pebble	171
Infant Sorrow	174
The Human Abstract	176
A Little BOY Lost	178
The Little Vagabond	180
The Fly	181
To Tirzah	183

6 BLAKE'S INNOCENCE AND EXPERIENCE

SECTION III—SONGS OF PROPHECY

	PAGE
"Introduction"	187
London	190
The Tyger	191
The Chimney Sweeper	201
Holy Thursday	202
The School Boy	203

PART III

THE MS. OF EXPERIENCE	207
---------------------------------	-----

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

For the purposes of reproduction the Illustrations have been selected from the following four examples of Blake's "Songs of Innocence and of Experience":—

The Carey Copy, which originally belonged to Judge Charles Warren, an example of Blake's early manner of illumination. (Keynes's Bibliography "X.")

A Riches Copy, which belonged to John Linnell, Blake's friend and benefactor, an example of the later and more florid manner. (Keynes "R.")

The Macgeorge Copy, now in the British Museum, originally the Beaconsfield Copy, another example of the earlier manner. (Keynes "A.")

The British Museum Small Copy, a composite collection of pages completed in both the early and later styles. (Keynes "N.")

The monochrome reproductions both of the designs and the MSS. have been placed in every case as near to the commentary as possible; but exact placing has had to be sacrificed in some cases to the desirability of inserting the illustrations in pairs, rather than singly with the contingent risk of their falling out when the book is subjected to hard usage.

IN COLOUR

	AT PAGE
i. General Title Page (<i>Carey</i>)	76
ii. Infant Joy (<i>Carey</i>)	76
iii. The Blossom (<i>Riches</i>)	76
iv. HOLY THURSDAY (Songs of Experience) (<i>B. M. Small</i>)	76

IN BLACK AND WHITE

i. General Title Page (<i>B. M. Small</i>)	78
--	----

SONGS OF INNOCENCE

2. Frontispiece (<i>Macgeorge</i>)	79
3. Title Page (<i>Carey</i>)	79
4. Introduction (The Piper) (<i>Macgeorge</i>)	82
5. The Shepherd (<i>Carey</i>)	84

8 BLAKE'S INNOCENCE AND EXPERIENCE

AT PAGE

6.	}	The Ecchoing Green (<i>Carey</i>)		86
7.				
8.		Laughing Song (<i>Carey</i>)		88
9.	}	Spring (<i>Macgeorge</i>)		89
10.				
11.		The Lamb (<i>B. M. Small</i>)		91
12.		A Dream (<i>Riches</i>)		93
13.		On Anothers Sorrow (<i>Macgeorge</i>)		94
14.		Nurse's Song (<i>Macgeorge</i>)		96
15.	}	Night (<i>B. M. Small</i>)		97
16.				
17.	}	A CRADLE SONG (<i>B. M. Small</i>)		99
18.				
19.		The Divine Image (<i>Carey</i>)		100
20.		HOLY THURSDAY (<i>Macgeorge</i>)		103
21.		The Little Boy lost (<i>B. M. Small</i>)		105
22.		The Little Boy found (<i>B. M. Small</i>)		106
23.		The Chimney Sweeper (<i>Macgeorge</i>)		108
24.	}	The Little Black Boy (<i>Carey</i>)		111
25.				
26.	}	The Little Girl Lost (<i>Carey</i>)		115
27.				
28.		The Little Girl Found (<i>Carey</i>)		115

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

9

	AT PAGE
29. Infant Joy (<i>Riches</i>)	122
30. The Blossom (<i>Carey</i>)	126
31. The Voice of the Ancient Bard (<i>Macgeorge</i>)	130

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

32. Frontispiece (<i>Carey</i>)	137
33. Title Page (<i>Carey</i>)	137
34. Introduction (The Bard) (<i>Macgeorge</i>)	145
35. EARTH'S Answer (<i>Macgeorge</i>)	147
36. { My Pretty ROSE TREE (<i>Macgeorge</i>)	150
{ AH ! SUN-FLOWER (<i>Macgeorge</i>)	150
{ THE LILLY (<i>Macgeorge</i>)	150
37. The GARDEN of LOVE (<i>Macgeorge</i>)	152
38. A POISON TREE (<i>Macgeorge</i>)	153
39. NURSE'S Song (<i>Carey</i>)	155
40. The SICK ROSE (<i>Riches</i>)	157
41. The Angel (<i>Carey</i>)	158
42. A Little GIRL Lost (<i>Carey</i>)	170
43. The CLOD & the PEBBLE (<i>Riches</i>)	172
44. INFANT SORROW (<i>Macgeorge</i>)	174
45. The Human Abstract (<i>Carey</i>)	176
46. A Little BOY Lost (<i>Riches</i>)	178
47. The Little Vagabond (<i>Carey</i>)	180

10 BLAKE'S INNOCENCE AND EXPERIENCE

	AT PAGE
48. THE FLY (<i>Macgeorge</i>)	182
49. To Tirzah (<i>Riches</i>)	186
50. LONDON (<i>Macgeorge</i>)	188
51. The Tyger (<i>B. M. Small</i>)	192
52. THE Chimney Sweeper (<i>Macgeorge</i>)	201
53. HOLY THURSDAY (<i>Riches</i>)	201
54. The School Boy (<i>Macgeorge</i>)	203
55. Tailpiece (<i>Carey</i>)	206
Three pages from the MS. "AN ISLAND IN THE MOON"	209

Seventeen pages from Blake's MS. Sketch Book, known as

THE ROSSETTI MANUSCRIPT¹

Pages 115 and 114	220
Pages 113 and 112	228
Pages 111 and 110	236
Pages 109 and 108	244
Pages 107 and 106	256
Pages 105 and 104	268
Pages 103 and 102	276
Pages 101 and 100	280
Page 99	285

¹ See page 209.

DATES OF INTEREST TO STUDENTS OF BLAKE'S INNOCENCE AND EXPERIENCE

- 1757 November 28th—William Blake born.
- 1761 Earliest vision recorded.
- 1762 June 19th—Robert Blake born.
- 1767 William went to Parr's Drawing School.
- 1769 Earliest poems known.
- 1771 William apprenticed to an Engraver.
- 1773 William engraved "Joseph of Arimathea among the Rocks of Albion."
- 1778 End of apprenticeship. Studies at Royal Academy.
- 1780 "Glad Day" engraved.
- 1781 Polly Wood and Catherine Boucher.
- 1782 August 18—William and Catherine married.
- 1783 "Poetical Sketches" printed, without author's revision.
- 1784 Print Shop opened. Robert comes to live with William.

(*TWOFOLD VISION*)

- 1787 Death of Robert in February of this year.
"An Island in the Moon" MS., including three Songs of
"Innocence" (or next year, *vide* Damon, pp. 32, 33).
- 1788 Lavater's "Aphorisms," with frontispiece engraved by W.
Blake.

12 BLAKE'S INNOCENCE AND EXPERIENCE

- 1788 c. The Tractates engraved: "There is No Natural Religion" (First and Second Series); and "All Religions are One."
- 1789 "Songs of Innocence" (dated).
 "The Book of Thel" (dated).
- 1791 Mary Wollstonecraft's "Original Stories from Real Life," with six illustrations by W. Blake, published. (Later in the year appeared her pamphlet, "A Vindication of the Rights of Women.") Tom Paine's "Rights of Man" (First Part) published.
1792. Paine's "Rights of Man" (Second Part) published.

(THREEFOLD VISION)

- 1793 Poems and Designs in the Rossetti MS. (*vide* Part III, *infra*), probably composed and drawn in 1792 or in the spring of 1793, after the sketches for (but perhaps before the engraving of) "For Children—The Gates of Paradise."
 "Ancient of Days" vision seen on staircase (later frontispiece to "Europe").
 "Visions of the Daughters of Albion" (dated).
 "America" (dated).
 Earliest engraving from the "Book of Job": "What is Man That thou shouldest Try Him Every Moment?" (dated August 18th).
 "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," probably engraved and printed about this time—after the MS. of "Experience," but before the engraving and final songs (not dated).
- 1794 "Songs of Innocence and of Experience Shewing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul" (dated).
 "Europe" (with "Ancient of Days" frontispiece) (dated).
 "The Book of Urizen" (dated).
 Engraving of "The Death of Ezekiel's Wife": "I take away from thee the Desire of thine Eyes" (dated October 27th).

- 1795 "The Song of Los"
 "The Book of Ahania" } (dated).
 "The Book of Los"
 "The Creation of Adam by Elohim" (colour-print).
- 1796 Five hundred and thirty-seven designs to Young's "Night Thoughts."
- 1797 "Vala" MS., dated but not engraved.

(FOURFOLD VISION)

- 1800 Blake goes to Felpham, where (probably) he attempts to complete "Vala" on a fourfold basis as "The Four Zoas."
- 1804 "Milton" (dated), making use of some of the "Vala" material.
 "Jerusalem," dated but probably not carried very far.
- 1818 "Jerusalem," perhaps completed.
- 1820 c. The Job Series first completed for Butts.
- 1825 The Job Engravings dated.
- 1827 The Dante Designs and Engravings.
 August 12th, William Blake dies.
- 1836 The British Museum (Print Room) purchases a composite copy of the "Songs of Innocence and of Experience."
- 1847 D. G. Rossetti purchases W. Blake's MS. Sketch-book for 10s. from Palmer, an attendant in the Antique Gallery of the British Museum.
- 1863 Gilchrist's "Life of William Blake" (Macmillan).
- 1868 Swinburne's "Critical Essay" (Chatto & Windus).
- 1893 Ellis and Yeats' 3-vol. edition, with reproductions of most of the Prophetic Books and a version of "Vala" in letterpress (Quaritch).

14 BLAKE'S INNOCENCE AND EXPERIENCE

- 1893 Ellis. Facsimile coloured reproduction of "Songs of Innocence
and of Experience."
- 1905 Sampson's Bibliographical Edition of the "Poetical Works"
(Clarendon Press).
- 1921 Keynes's Bibliography (Grolier Club, New York).
- 1925 Keynes's 3-vol. complete Blake (Nonesuch Press).
- 1927 Centenary Year. Plowman's "Everyman" Blake (Dent).

PREFACE

AN EXPOSITORY ESSAY ADDRESSED TO MAX PLOWMAN

MY DEAR PLOWMAN,

Nothing is more certain than the fact that this book would never have been written but for you. Years ago I read a paper on "The Tyger" to the Blake Society, but it had long lain untouched in my drawer, because "The Tyger" is part of a book, and the book is part of a man. Without understanding the book one cannot understand the poem, and without understanding the man one cannot understand the book. For though these Songs were the first great expression of Blake's genius, the engraving of them comes in "the middle of the journey" of his life, and if they are in a sense the beginning of his life-work it should never be forgotten that they are the culmination of more than twenty years of art, and more than thirty of passionate living. To treat them cursorily as early work is to miss much of what is most important and most exquisite in them.

"Songs of Innocence and of Experience Shewing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul" is a title that ought to warn us that we are not dealing simply with a collection of songs about childhood and youth, but with a treatise and an exposition. And yet the word "Songs" tells us truthfully that the form is poetry. Blake could write prose when he wished, and if the form is spoilt for us when the meaning is made clear, the book has failed of its purpose and we should be forced to make a choice between the meaning and the poetry. But Blake has not put us in this dilemma. He weaves his meaning over and under the surface of his song, and by tracking its course above and below, we need lose none of the music of

the verse and may often discover rich harmonies of beauty resounding in the deeps. Many of the Songs, it is true, are simple enough. They are exactly what they seem ; lyrics of birdlike beauty and Arcadian charm. Others have a double beauty, a beauty of simple meaning and an accompanying beauty of remoter thought. In a few the very poetry seems to recede into magic caves, whence it can only be unearthed by deep study of the charms of Blake's magicianry.

But both beauty and meaning are harnessed to an end. The word "Shewing" betrays Blake's didactic purpose. He has set out to enlighten us about the Soul of Man, and to do this he must give us a living realisation of its "Two Contrary States."

Blake at this time saw all things twofold. If the soul had its contrary states, words and images had their secondary and deeper meaning, while vision itself, the organic faculty of speculation in the eye, was often vividly twofold. I believe that there were moments of exaltation when Blake quite literally saw double—not as the drunkard sees, one vision in two places, but two visions in one place, knowing there to be but one thing there. A tree by a stream in the sunshine appeared not only as a tree, but as a paradise of angels, and yet still as a tree, indeed only a tree seen in imaginative vision.

This ecstatic mystic experience is the foundation of Blake's power, but it is only towards the middle of his life that he begins attempting the supremely difficult task of expressing it in art ; and these "Songs," when we begin to understand them, appear as the record of the first, and in some ways most successful, of all his attempts.

Yet before I knew you I was very content (like most people) to understand some part of the "Songs of Experience," and all (as I supposed) of the "Songs of Innocence," and to leave the rest alone. Indeed I rather disliked the idea of attempting any complete understanding. This may have been partly due to the fact that some of Mr Ellis's interpretations in his facsimile edition of 1893 often seemed to me both unpoetic

and unconvincing—partly, it certainly was, because (to be quite frank) I did not like what appeared to be the evident inner meaning of some of the “Songs of Experience.”

It was you who gradually persuaded me out of this attitude. Your keen and sympathetic interest in the fragmentary ideas I had gradually accumulated; your unfailing conviction that what was good enough for Blake was good enough for the rest of us; and your determination to do nothing yourself on the “Songs” till I had published my views, led me on, step by step, until one day, to my great surprise, I found myself able to read every one of the “Songs” with understanding. Since then I have been continually more and more surprised that I could ever have doubted the value of critical examination. Those rainbow mists, that hoar frost delicacy, which one is so afraid of desecrating and destroying, so far from melting in the sunlight, proves to be hard as tracery in chiselled marble, and the very ugliness of some of Blake’s anger reveals the strength and beauty of the mind outraged and angered.

There is, I think, a reason almost in the nature of things why these “Songs” have remained so long undisturbed, or almost undisturbed, by interpretation. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that Blake’s modernity is so astonishing that a full century was needed since his death to prepare us for some of the things he had to say. I believe that there is a better chance than there ever was, at any other time, for some of his most lovely revelations of the “human soul” to be understood.

Blake’s system sometimes entangled him and helped to weave that vast complex of obscurity which envelops his later poetry. But his fundamental philosophy, as we find it here, is singularly simple and sane. Joy he conceives as the core of life, joy which we do not learn, or receive, or derive, from something else, but which is our being and essence. And yet no one better understood the part played by sorrow in the expansion of the soul. Grief and misunderstanding indeed may be so bad as to destroy souls, so far as anything can ever be destroyed. In

*"A Little BOY Lost," and "A Little GIRL Lost,"*¹ we have the stories of innocence thwarted and destroyed at the very moment when it was reaching out to experience. But every birth into a higher life may be through the portals of pain and distress; so that radiant as our essential Being is, there is no place too dark or dire for the mind to contemplate or for the soul to explore. If God is manifest as the Lamb "by the stream and oer the mead," He can reveal Himself equally "in the forests of the night" as the Tyger. And when the night yields to day it is a greater day.

Poetry itself can never be explained. We can never say why certain images and sequences of words produce an effect so magical on the ear and on the mind. But by understanding Blake's meaning we sometimes hear his poetry where we did not hear it before, and we are no longer obliged to conceive some of his most wonderful lines as "a happiness that often madness hits on which reason and sanity could not so prosperously be delivered of." For in truth this explanation, so long adopted by the world, is as untrue of Blake as it was originally of Hamlet. The happiness he hits on is neither accidental nor insane. It is, on the contrary, extraordinarily calculated and ordered. If the verses are baffling, it is often for the plain reason that we only understand the single meaning of words that have a double one, and until we have discovered the secondary content we sometimes lose the sense and sometimes even the song. For the magic of poetry is not for the ear alone, and without a clue to their meaning the words, however exquisitely assembled, fail to move, or move the surface and leave the depths unstirred.

And yet with all his maturity of meaning and mastery of craft Blake is in many ways singularly childlike. Indeed, he might almost be described as the boy who grew up to be a master, a genius, a prophet, with-

¹ The words BOY and GIRL in these titles should always be thus transcribed from Blake's text in order to help distinguish them from the other poems: "The Little Boy lost," "The Little Boy found," "The Little Girl Lost," and "The Little Girl Found."

out ever "growing up." Like other geniuses he shows a rare association of comparatively common powers which, finding themselves in company, are stimulated to an intense activity, and in moments of inspiration accomplish supreme achievements of the human mind. But taken separately very many of the strands which make up Blake's peculiar genius are characteristically childlike things. Children love to draw pictures and then paint them in bright colours; to make up little rhymes and sing them; they think it would be very nice if we all ran about naked and played with the animals; they like to imagine dreadful and lovely things happening; they are often very angry with the grown-up world, and if any god or gods dared to create such a place, then with them too. All these things Blake understood not as an outsider but because they were himself. The conviction that there is perfect well-being and enjoyment for us all, if only we were kind to one another; that the angels are good and (whatever the stupid world may think) that they are especially concerned with ourselves and our achievements; that the good and great of ages past are either very unimportant people, or our own particular friends with whom we hold easy discourse about things outsiders cannot understand—all these things, however true or untrue, are not things we first learn to think after we are grown up, and it takes a genius like Blake's to make them speak in Art and Poetry. It is true that in the "Songs of Innocence" Blake's childlikeness is to some extent deliberately assumed. But I consider that there is something of the child in his faith in the use of metaphor and symbol to explain and simplify the mysteries of being; and certainly the visionary faculty itself, though not confined to children, is almost universal in some form with children, and very seldom survives in full to later years.

There are certain other childlike features of the "Songs." One of these is Blake's perfect indifference to being understood. He seems quite as happy talking to the angels as a child talking to its dolls, without

a thought of being overheard. I do not believe he hid his meaning for fear of shocking his readers. On the contrary I think he rather enjoyed shocking them, as most clever children do. But he himself had a beautiful and childlike absence of reticence, and he was afraid of being hurt if he emerged too unprotected into a blighting publicity.

I think it is Blake's childlikeness that always subjects his genius to being put in its place by the grown-up world. They did it in his own day, and they will do it in days to come, but meanwhile there will always be new generations of youth discovering him afresh and who will put up with certain childish crudities, to find both rapture and wisdom in his attempt to express youth's most insistent visions.

*A characteristic of Blake's which, though not in itself childlike, is closely connected with things that are, is his intense concentration of meaning. As you have often pointed out, he has so much to say (like a child he wants to say it all at once) that he can only express himself by using words that mean a great many things, and his symbols are often nothing else than bundles crammed with feelings and meanings, laboriously assembled, but, once completed, full of picturesque and dramatic possibilities, and indispensable to his intensely condensed expression. I cannot honestly say that I consider he uses them in the end with great success. "Jerusalem," which is the noblest of his great prophecies and contains more precious nuggets than any, is not only burdened with a sevenfold obscurity, but is too prevailingly full of gloom and of unconvin-
vincing horror for really great poetry. Much of what he had to say was for his own relief of mind, and it becomes a burden upon ours. It was a thunderstorm following the exquisite sweetness of his morning song and the fierce heat of his midday, full of a certain splendour and power, but perhaps justified only vicariously as Art, through its effect in purging Blake's own heroic and beautiful mind. And yet I don't know. I think I will change my simile. Blake's greater prophecies are castles and estates he has left us, with too many dungeons in them,*

perhaps, and with many strange uncouth places, but where it happens that as one strays one sometimes meets the master unawares. Sometimes he flits away as though reluctant to be seen; but there are memorable hours when he holds forth in golden speech, and always when he does so he takes one to visit other chambers in his palaces and fairy lawns in the sweet gardens hanging on his hills.

But to return to these early lyrics. In them the concentration is often as great as in anything Blake ever uttered. There is comparatively little actual symbolism, but there is constant and abundant use of symbolical metaphor, which must be understood if we are to enjoy either the meaning or the beauty to the full.¹

The music which he composed and to which he sang his songs is, we must fear, for ever lost. But much of his work suggests musical analogies, and I might almost describe my book in one aspect as the attempt to explain his harmonies of meaning in his verse and sometimes in his design. For except in some of the "wren-like warblings" of "Innocence," almost all his greatest works are harmonies, a theme with a deeper and sometimes several deeper meanings reverberating below, or perhaps one should say within. "The Blossom," for instance, is a pretty little song of the garden on the surface, but it is also (fairly obviously) a lullaby or cradle song. Closely examined, it turns out to be a unique and exquisite love-song, conveyed in symbol and closely associated with the exquisite inner theme of "Infant Joy." Deepest of all, it reveals itself in conjunction with the illustration as an essay on bodily Love, its beauty and its course in Human Life, not omitting also its expression in Art. All this is condensed into forty-four words, including the title (twenty-seven if we omit repetitions) and a few simple lines of decoration—the work certainly of a very great master and craftsman, but a master of

¹ When Blake uses the Serpent to represent the Priest, it has become a pure symbol, whatever its origin. But when he uses a tree, or green leaves, to represent the flesh, it is a metaphor expressive of the sweet earthiness of the unreflective life of man and animals.

childlike words, of unconventional but essentially childlike ideas, of a childlike absence of reticence, of childlike and joyous originality, and, as I have said, of a childlike indifference to being understood.

Closely connected with Blake's concentration of thought is his swiftness of expression. Many of these lyrics, as we find them in the MSS., appear to have been written rapidly without alteration. Others show a few minor changes. Others again, considerable and even repeated changes of great importance, and sometimes a poem is actually changed in the course of composition into something quite different in content and meaning. But the changes themselves are swift and striking. He often changes a great thing into something much greater, and seldom returns to an earlier form without an obvious reason. In fact, we seem to understand his dictum as we read his MSS., that it is in a "Time, less than a pulsation of the artery," that "the Poet's Work is Done." ("Milton," 30⁶² and 31¹.)

The work of exposition therefore is often nothing else than a slow motion picture produced from the MSS. With their help we can sometimes discover the process by which Blake arrives at his astonishing results, and watch the rapid notions of a mind that could combine, as in a flash, the most complex thoughts and feelings, till they seemed one swift and glorious sweep of the wing.

The work of analysing and criticising the "Songs" has become more and more fascinating as it has proceeded. And yet it was with no small hesitation, at first, that I contemplated offering the results of my labours to the public—not altogether from a fear of exposing the secret places of Blake's soul, but because human nature does not like being offered a key where it was conscious of no confinement. And the "Songs of Innocence," at all events, have generally been considered to be as lucid as they were childlike. I must gratefully acknowledge that both the critics and Blake public in general have been more than generous in their reception of my previous effort to unveil a work of Blake's that

had not hitherto been regarded as veiled.¹ But I could hardly have ventured to "profane with my unworthy hand This holy shrine" had I not been constantly assured that there was at least one other Blake enthusiast for whom the shrine grew holier as it was more closely explored. So, though I would not make you responsible for anything in the form, you cannot escape sharing my responsibility for the fact of this book which despite all its imperfections I wish, in the first place, to present to you.

The difference between interpreting the "Songs" and the "Job" that will first strike the uninitiated is that in the one case we have mainly to do with poems and in the other case with pictures. But this difference is not nearly as great as might appear; for Blake certainly turned almost indifferently from the one to the other as a means of expressing exact ideas.²

A far more important difference lies in the fact that in studying the Job designs one had practically the whole of Blake's lifework for reference. Nearly everything he has left us had now been done, and any symbolism was almost certain to have been used somewhere before; any idea to have been somewhere else expressed. So that the merest hint in the symbolism of the designs often led with certainty to conclusions as to their intention.

But when Blake printed his "Songs of Innocence" he had produced very little of deep import, and even the interesting works dated between the "Songs of Innocence" and those of "Experience"³ tell us less of his mind and mental history than the "Songs" themselves. On the

¹ Blake's "Vision of the Book of Job," 1910 and 1924.

² "He [Milton] said he had committed an error in his 'Paradise Lost,' which he wanted me to correct in a poem or picture."—Crabb Robinson's "Reminiscences."

³ "The Marriage" is not dated, and though it is of incalculable importance for the interpretation of almost all Blake's works, it cannot itself be understood until the "Two Contrary States" have been fully considered.

other hand, to elucidate early work by later, or a merely incipient symbolism by a far more developed one, is a task to be undertaken with the utmost caution. It was necessary, therefore, to begin by making the "Songs" interpret the "Songs." In doing this I should like to say that I have never assumed that any of them had an ulterior meaning if the obvious meaning entirely explained them, as I think it often does.

It is not unlikely that for Blake himself they all had depths below the surface. The green woods and the dimpling stream, even in their laughter, probably held suggestions for him of something more than trees and water. For is not the life of man a green bough and a flowing brook? But I have made it my business to look below the surface only when "Blake" seemed to disappear. Where the plain words seemed sufficiently filled with his own mind and song, that was enough for me. Only where ever so little of an irregularity or inconsequence appeared on the surface, or where something far too trite or commonplace for his strong mind appeared as the simple meaning, did I search below to find the light. Imagine a fairy lake—a kind of gateway to magic caves beneath, the surface pitted here and there with tiny vortices unnoticed a thousand times, until one day a spirit led us down, and through a crevice in the bottom, along a swift stream that trickled into jewelled caverns where the prince of faery built his home: imagine that and you will then be ready to read my book; for I will take you where I have been led. You may skip for the present the rest of this long preface, which will only tell you about the kind of thing that interests us as editors and students—how I made the "Songs" elucidate one another; how I made Blake's life elucidate the "Songs"; and how I made the MSS. elucidate both the life and the "Songs." Before you start on Part III (the story of the MS. "Songs") you will want to know more of all this. But for the moment I would have you waste no more time before you read about "The Piper," "The Little Black Boy," "Infant Joy," "The Blossom,"

"My Pretty Rose Tree," "Infant Sorrow," "The Tyger," "Holy Thursday," "The School Boy," and the rest. I know that you will not finally close the covers until you have returned to hear all I have to say about how this book came to be, and how it came to be this book.

At your command I bought Mr Jack Lindsay's¹ book and read it with keen interest and sympathy, if not with unqualified assent. I was particularly glad to find it beginning with the serious attempt to understand Blake before attempting to interpret his writings or designs. The facts of Blake's life that have come down to us may be meagre, but they are sufficient to tell us a very great deal, without which criticism of the texts and illustrations must be rather halting at best. If Blake had been born in Italy, or even France, or perhaps anywhere in the thirteenth century, he would have been understood as a visionary mystic, uncommon perhaps, but not unique. But a boy who saw angels in the hay-fields near London, in the early years of the reign of George the Third, was bound to get into trouble; and though he was not actually, or even spiritually, burnt alive like "A Little BOY Lost" in the "Songs of Experience," he only got through to manhood with a good deal of luck and some damage. His Age turned out to be one of genius; but Wordsworth had the good fortune to be born in Cumberland and to realise in the Lake District a form of mystic vision which was in no sense dependent on supernatural imagery, and which appealed to his countrymen even at the time and has never failed to do so increasingly since. Keats and Shelley were born in a slightly happier age, and were so steeped in form and colour from Mediterranean lands that, even without the smell of earth in rocks and lonely places, they found abundant imagery for their dreams. But Blake, with a soul more like Words-

¹ "William Blake: Creative Will and the Poetic Image." By Jack Lindsay, Fanfrolico Press. Mr Lindsay's essay on the Poetical Sketches is a still more recent contribution.

worth's than either Keats or Shelley or even Coleridge,¹ had only got through Swedenborg and Bunyan and Michel Angelo (in prints), images which echoed with faint harmonics of Giotto and Fra Angelico, and he had to revive in his own mind things which for centuries had scarcely been alive in any other. And so it happened that Blake's vision was often clouded with self-assertion, with a sense of injustice, and with all the forms of perversity and exaggeration which follow in the wake of not being understood. But finally Wordsworth, and a thin stream of enlightened minds all through the century, accepted his genius with the addendum that it was coupled with insanity. Poor Blake! It did not leave much hope of a clear understanding of what he had to say, and for about a hundred years after he published these "Songs" it was common among those who printed his poems to rewrite them from his manuscript, and for those who recounted his life to record its most revealing incidents with a kind of friendly amusement. Blake often invites us to laugh with him, perhaps more often than we think, but it is seldom or never worth while to laugh at him, lest we lose "some necessary question of the play."

† But before taking, as I propose, a brief survey of certain formative moments in Blake's life before he wrote the "Songs," I want to refer once again to Mr Lindsay. He introduces a question which nearly concerns the

¹ Blake sometimes seems to be a Wordsworth without what Wordsworth calls "the anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse, the guide, the guardian of my heart and soul of all my moral being" ("Tintern Abbey"). Compare, for instance, Blake's tree full of angels in "Peckham Rye" with Wordsworth's: "But there's a tree of many one . . . whither is fled the visionary gleam, where is it now the glory and the dream" ("Intimations"). Blake had to do it all himself. Nature sustained his imagination with no "Visions of the hills And Souls of lonely places" (Prelude, Book I)—so that when his ecstatic delight in this green earth waxed to mystic rapture, it clothed itself in images projected from within upon the screen of outward vision—images originally derived either from some deep atavistic memories, if such exist, or from celestial or infernal creatures seen in books—Bunyan, the Bible, Milton, or where not—rather than in 'low breathings' from the hills.

student of "Experience" and must inevitably, sooner or later, come up for fuller discussion. After quoting from "*A Little GIRL Lost*" he says: "How in the face of such undeniable facts the myth of Blake the Good Man continues, it is hard to say." Here Mr Lindsay appears to me to walk straight into "*Satan's Labyrinth*," which is "talking of what is Good and Evil or of what is Right or Wrong."¹ There is only one way out. We must discuss not good and evil, but facts. Translated into terms of crude fact I take it (I hope I am not misinterpreting him) that what Mr Lindsay cannot believe is that Blake's first and only mistress was Catherine, his wife. Myself I have not a doubt of it. My reasons, if they seem paradoxical to the casual reader, will, I believe, appear incontrovertible to the critical student of Blake's psychology; and as I know you to have an open mind in the matter I put them before you with some confidence. It is scarcely too much to say that the greater part of the MS. of "Experience" (which I deal with in Part III) shows Blake girding and struggling against the marriage bond, and his protest is patently personal. Now, no man struggles, and protests, and cries in anguish, against bonds he has already broken; and if Blake had ever strayed from the paths of strict "virtue" he would certainly have done so again at this moment of passionate agony. But what happened was the extraordinary thing that would seem even more extraordinary if it had not happened so often since, and no doubt before: his agony was assuaged and finally entirely exorcised by a complete reconciliation with his wife and with marriage itself. It is true that the MS. shows him at some pains to assert that he has not hauled down his flag. Love, he still protests, is only polluted by being outwardly bound; and since our true desire is to see one another satisfied, wives should give their handmaids to their husbands. But marriage in the spirit is henceforth

¹ "Here they are no longer talking of what is Good & Evil, or of what is Right or Wrong & puzzling themselves in *Satan's Labyrinth*, But are Conversing with Eternal Realities as they Exist in the Human Imagination."—MS. essay on the Last Judgment.

accepted (the very title of his next great work shows it), and under the name of "Beulah" marriage actually becomes the symbol of threefold vision. These are only some of the subtle indications of a change of front. As for the handmaids, we know that Mrs Blake gave up having a servant about this time, and we are told that her tears dissuaded Blake from adopting a concubine. We may if we like assume a connection. What we probably never shall know is how far Blake's demand for liberty (and more particularly as it was liberty for himself) was actually for liberty of thought and imaginative vision. Some of his indignation is clearly provoked, I think, by the pretence that we must not find artistic and poetic enjoyment in the beauty of a woman's person unless we are licensed to do so by the "Priest." What makes the matter difficult is Blake's conviction that thought "Is" act; so that in claiming liberty of mind he is logically compelled to claim liberty of action. But whereas all his work, both in word and design, reveals a liberty of thought that is startling even to-day, I have never been able to find a word or line that can be interpreted as a vestige telling of experiences in love outside the "Marriage Ring." This to me is final. Blake's mind was a sensitive plate of such delicacy, and his MSS. are so entirely without reserves, that it is unimaginable that anything remains to be revealed such as history has discovered in Wordsworth's early life or such as all the world knows of Burns and Byron. If Blake had ever had a liaison with another woman we should have known as much about it as if he had been Shelley. But in the one instance which may be read as the story of a temptation to stray, he expressly says that he rejected the offer.¹

Important as it is when projecting the future to consider what ought to be, nothing is more dangerous when investigating the past than a too absorbing interest in what ought to have been. And whatever ought to have been the case, Blake was in point of fact almost as certainly a scrupulously faithful husband as he was a glowing prophet of freedom in love.

¹ *Vide infra*, "My Pretty ROSE TREE," and the MS. in Part III.

Inconsistencies are only to be accepted as a last resort. But when they are manifestly unavoidable they throw the past into sudden relief, giving us living images instead of the flat shadow pictures which so generally have to do duty for our restorations of bygone days. And so far as inconsistency is concerned, Blake must share this charge with a large number of his contemporaries. They publicly professed to uphold the sanctity of marriage and privately claimed liberty for themselves. Blake publicly proclaimed liberty and privately remained faithful to his wife. Those interested in the matter can, no doubt, chase the subject about in the "labyrinth" to decide whether Blake was consistent, or honest, or right, in having such views and such apparently opposite conduct; but they will find it very difficult to discover any solid ground for an alternative version of the facts. And such inconsistency as there undoubtedly was, is not, I think, very difficult to explain. We all want liberty, and we all see the dire effects of mental and moral fetters upon ourselves and others; but liberty is never to be won by the mere breaking of outward bonds. For a spirit like Blake's, liberty must be complete and inward. So long as there was something in his own mind that held him captive he might rail in vain against the bonds imposed by Man, or Nature, or God. Every attempt to liberate his body ended in an incarceration of his soul, and it was only at last by his discovery of spiritual freedom that he found his body had therein become free, without the breaking of any bodily bonds at all. That this was Blake's "way out" I feel less and less doubt. What he really cares about is that love shall be regarded as essentially holy, and bonds as essentially unholy.¹

¹ The matter has just been put much more tersely by Mr Basil de Sélincourt in his Introduction to Blake's "Selected Poems" (Oxford University Press). "His wrathful advocacy of free love misleads nobody to-day. Had he really known the conditions of freedom, he would have celebrated it less insistently; not being free, he proclaims he must be so" (p. xiii). My only addendum would be that through this struggle he was shortly to become freed, though not in the way he struggled for freedom.

A legitimate scruple will no doubt remain in many readers' minds, not so much as to Blake's own morals, but as to his influence upon his public. But here I think it should be frankly said that Blake is a prophet and not a preceptor. It is not a prophet's business to consider what is practical; to ask whether swords are available for plow-shares, or what lions may be persuaded to lie down with lambs. His business is to show us a vision which the child's heart in man leaps to accept; "the wishing-cap of Fortunatus"—the sapphire walls of a New Jerusalem—the tropic isles of naked innocence—the love that has no fear. Our business is to find out how, and in what sense, this dream may become true without laying bare our defences against the savage wild that ever haunts the uncertain confines of Humanity.

But we have got on too fast. Before we come to the story of the MS. book and threefold vision, which is to be dealt with fully in Part III, and which for myself, and doubtless for many others, will be the most interesting part of this study, there is one supreme episode connected with twofold vision that was possibly the most epoch-making event of Blake's life. After the boyhood visions and the apprenticeship in Westminster Abbey, and the early "Songs" with their idyllic love—"So when she speaks the voice of Heaven I hear"—and the market-gardener's daughter who consoled him so generously, and his glorious marriage with her, comes his association with his brother as a companion and pupil in his own home.

One cannot doubt that this was a happier thing for William and Robert than it was for Catherine whose work it doubled and whose privileges it halved. Indeed it may be questioned whether it left her anything at all. Blake certainly found a higher stimulus in his brother's genius than in his wife's devotion. It is possible, too, that her lack of education did not, after all, count for nothing. The one glimpse we have of the relations of these three sensitive and valiant spirits shows

a climax of tension in which Blake violently championed his brother against his wife. Even if the story itself did not assure us that Robert, in the end, admitted himself wrong, and that Mrs Blake exhibited an almost incredible meekness and patience, we should find it easier to believe that Blake made unreasonable, and even impossible, demands on his wife than that she was wanting either in duty or devotion.

But the matter was for Blake something far deeper than a personal one. His holy and passionate joy in the consummation of sex and in "Naked Beauty displayed,"¹ which symbolised so much for him, became something definitely secondary to his passion and joy in art and its spiritual theme.² It seems clear that he felt Robert an associate in these higher adventures of the spirit such as Catherine could never become. Indeed, I doubt whether Blake ever realised his wife until years later. She was at this time his "emanation," the heart and jewel of his visionary joy in life; but it was the storm recorded in the MS. book that made her something more and in a new sense his life-companion. Meanwhile her light was but a pale one compared with the mystic experience of continuous intercourse with a kindred genius. We are perhaps liable to take for granted that Blake over-estimated his brother's powers. But it appears to me that the most startlingly original Blake drawings previous to Robert's death are by him, and not by William. And his one remark that has come down to us is certainly not commonplace.³ According to Blake himself it was under his brother's influence, even after death, that he worked for many years. The possibility that the astonishing development of Blake's powers after his thirtieth year was the aftermath of an intimate association with a great and very

¹ Laocoön. Cf. "The nakedness of woman is the work of God."—"The Marriage."

² This is most clearly set forth on p. 77 of "Jerusalem," but there is no doubt that in his twofold and threefold vision, sex was the symbol and image of the real or spiritual Creation.

³ "Young woman, you lie. I am in the wrong" is not exactly a soothing way of putting it; but it records the emotions of an instant in a way that can never be forgotten.

original mind, is by no means to be lightly dismissed. For it must be remembered that there is something that requires accounting for. The incursion of great genius into Blake's quiet and respectable Lambeth life at an age when most men are safe from such disturbance is certainly to be connected with Robert and his early death, and if we may suppose him to have been an immature but master mind, the mystery is a little less inscrutable.

In any case, the great crisis of "twofold vision" was Robert's death. We see Blake watching day and night for a fortnight by his brother's bed, and then when he died, sleeping himself for three days and nights continuously ("Gilchrist," I. p. 59) to rise into a new life. He had seen his brother's spirit disappearing "through the ceiling," clapping its hands for joy. A window into Eternity has been opened for Blake that made the events of Time seem shadows. In that moment he had vision of "The Immortal Man that cannot Die," and realised that his brother was with him always.

To understand Blake we must take some trouble to realise this moment. Those long weeks of a single absorbing preoccupation by Robert's bedside, the final relief anticipated with fear but realised in joy, the deep sleep that night by the bedside continued all the next day and through another night and even a second day and a third night till friends might begin to wonder and doubt—we must see all this and at last his radiant waking in a state of a calm spiritual exaltation. There, still, lay the dead body, a beautiful image of Robert, poised already on the verge of corruption and decay, while the mental image in Blake's own mind was more vivid than ever. It was then that Blake knew something which his contemporaries did not understand, but which we are beginning to study in these latter days. The subconscious mind, which sometimes presents us with mental pictures more vivid than the retina itself can present, is a world of reality where our primal emotions of love and fear and hope work like a sea.

Like other painters Blake could see his pictures before he painted them—could see them line for line as he would draw them. And when love or fear gave him one of these pictures as a clear vision that he could always call up in his mind at will, and which remained undimmed for thirty years and more, it is no wonder that he held it for a glimpse into Eternity. Most of us only see these wonderfully vivid visionary pictures in dreams when the retina is quiescent. But Blake's imagination was so powerful that he saw them when wide awake, with the curious result that there was a kind of mental fusion between them and the retinal image, and he loves to tell us the very place where the image was first located. It was a tree in Peckham Rye that he saw full of angels. It was on his stairs at Hercules Buildings (where the top staircase window had a large space of blank wall above it) that he saw the "Ancient of Days" bending down to perform "The Act of Creation"; it was "through the ceiling" that he saw his brother's spirit ascend. It was the rising sun that he saw as "an Innumerable company of the Heavenly host, crying, 'Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty.'"

And for this reason, with all his visions Blake never deserts the earth. We miss all the virtue of his mighty sanity if we miss this fact. Vision did not transport him into another world. It enlightened him to see this one in its glory. "Thou art a Man, God is no more. Thy own humanity learn to adore" is the core of all Blake had to say. It is the very same thing as Wordsworth had to say—indeed, as Shakespeare had to say—and perhaps as all supreme genius has to say. But what Shakespeare did by means of drama, and Wordsworth by means of visions of the hills and waters, Blake attempted to do by means of images that surged up from the subconscious deeps of man's pristine fears and delights.

"The clouds were touched," says Wordsworth, "and in their silent faces did he read unutterable love." And so for Blake the face of earth and of all visible things was "touched," and became the symbol or expression of more essential things that haunt our deeps of being. The

outer is mortal and perishing, the inner is unchanging and eternal. The life of man lies between. Our joy is to see "a Heaven in a Wild Flower," and our work is the labour of painting this life with the colours, radiant or thunderous, that the spirit has flashed upon this World in its escape. This escape is not into vacancy but back into the deep mind where it ceases to be objective and delineable. And there follows the life of art and imagination, flooded with meaning for those to whom the mystic experience howsoever induced has meaning, almost necessarily dark and disappointing to those for whom it is only something heard of with the hearing of the ear.

Yet, even for them, these early lyrics often speak with "the voice of joy." For almost all of them tremble on the borderland of realms beyond the setting sun, where Blake's vivid mind had travelled while his body walked our common ways. The rivers and hills, the green earth and the creatures on it, the sun and moon, the night and morning, even the mother and child are already half symbols. They already represent something more than themselves. The Lamb is Christ, the Mother almost is Earth, the grass and the trees are the sweet nature that nourishes our bodily being, the stream is the river of life and yet a real tinkling stream as well.

And thus it comes about that a natural poetic symbolism grows up almost unconsciously as Blake sings. It is his pipe and gives us melodies that tuneless words could not convey. All earth had been wonderful to him, and all earth became symbolical.

In this way, though there is no simple solution and no master-key to their symbolism, as there is to that of the "Job" illustrations, there is discoverable a fairly simple symbolic method, springing out of Blake's twofold vision begotten of his own experience. "This world" has become to him two things according as it is seen, vision often revealing things as the very opposite of what they seem. The solid and objective is perishing, the fleeting is eternal. Thus all this material world is

watery, but Thought is like rock, and Reason freezes matter into stone. This life is ever symbolised by the vegetable creation—the grass, the flowers, the rushes, and above all by the trees and forests, because it grows up from water and earth and its life is confined to the blind increase of growth and reproduction. Thus the soft “clod” of clay represents merely instinctive physical love, the love of innocence, like the ewe’s for the lamb. It brings forth the grass and underlies the life of the beasts of the field. It gives and ever gives without any realisation of individuality. It is only when the hardness of thought enters that love appears as a form of self-seeking, and the “pebble” represents the hedonistic philosopher for whom self-sacrifice is an illusion. From both these extremes we are rescued only by the fires of the Spirit, subtler than water, irresistible as rock, and symbolised often by wild beasts such as the Tyger.

Evening, night and morning again are constantly used symbolically but not perhaps quite systematically. Evening I take to be generally the approach of adolescent desires; night is often the confusion and gloom that follow, and that include disillusionment, but it is a period sometimes passed in sleep—the sleep of sex, and then sometimes associated with moonlight or the stars. Morning is the realisation of passion and of the spiritual life which at its best sex opens.

The symbolism of the illustrations is principally the same as that in the verse. But in the two frontispieces and elsewhere, we find the Right and Left symbolism definitely used (as it had already been in the “Tractates”), and in the illustration to “The Blossom” we find the earliest example, so far as I know, of the clockwise current of creation.

We thus come to the “Songs of Innocence,” engraved and printed as the eternal spirit of Robert found it good that they should be engraved and printed some two years after his death in Time. We shall be prepared to find deep meaning and experience in them, sometimes hidden and sometimes twofold. Occasionally some slight peculiarity of

expression will suggest a remoter significance, as in "The Little Boy lost," where we read "No father was there," the plain story merely requiring some such expression as "his father was far." It seems to say "There was no father," and one is led to suspect that the "vapour" was a spiritual, not a physical illusion. The sequel ("The Little Boy found") in any case records a spiritual adventure. But before considering separate poems let us examine certain features in the presentment of the "Contrary States" as a whole.

When the second part was added Blake made certain transferences of poems in "Innocence" to "Experience." The most surprising of these is the "Laughing Song," which he actually printed twice over, once in "Innocence" and once in "Experience." This may possibly have been a slip, but I rather doubt it. It is at least as probable that he intended to say that free and careless laughter is as essential a part of "Experience" as it is of "Innocence." It is true that he never again put the "Laughing Song" in "Experience," but after a time he transferred "The School Boy" from "Innocence" to "Experience" for good, the theme of which is the importance of Innocence as an experience.

A still more important question is why he transferred "The" Little Girl Lost (and Found), which he afterwards consistently kept in "Experience," even though he had added "A" Little GIRL Lost to the work. Certainly, if we read the story quite literally it was a sufficiently severe "experience" to be carried off by wild beasts in one's sleep; but one can hardly suppose Blake "innocent" enough to regard this as a typical incident of childhood, or that if it were, the parental anxiety manifested should appear so extremely superfluous. Far-fetched as it may appear to some readers to suppose the little girl's "Experience" to have been the great and terrible experience of love, it is surely easier than to suppose the story to be literal. Its counterpart, "A" Little GIRL Lost, is definitely stated in the prelude to

be about "love" (as indeed it very obviously is), and although the prelude to "The" Little Girl Lost only speaks of a "garden," we may gather what the garden represents from the title of another song, "The Garden of Love," and also from the obvious metaphor or symbolism in several of the songs in which flowers represent female favours or women in love. If any doubt remains it would be finally settled by the illustrations.

If it is "love" which little girls are lost and found in, in what are little boys lost and found? It must be something more fundamental than sex love because, though Blake wrote "A" Little BOY Lost for "Experience," he kept "The" Little Boy lost in "Innocence." So that whatever its nature may be it characterises the Soul in both its "States." The difference between boys and girls in Blake's symbolical mind lies in the Miltonic principle that woman worships Man as man worships God. "Little boys" in the "Songs" are concerned with theological or philosophical ideas and "little girls" with the affections. If it is independence in love which leads the latter into trouble (and joy), it is independence in thought which leads the former into trouble, and sometimes to truth. In his unpublished "Motto to the Songs of Innocence and of Experience" he says that the good "think not for themselves, till Experience teaches them"; and I take it that the Little Boy is beginning to think for himself, for in losing a father that was not "there," and finding one that always is, he has made the supreme philosophical discovery of the immanence of the Divine life within ourselves.¹ This interpretation in its turn throws new light on the Little Black Boy, who is clearly half a symbol, and finds a Divine Father, as does the Chimney Sweeper. These

¹ In the "Island in the Moon," where the first part of this song occurs, Blake shows that he has already been thinking about independence of thought, by such remarks as "Obtuse Angle's": "Whenever you think you must always think for yourself." And Aradobo's whimsical reply: "How sir? Whenever I think I must think myself I think I do."

are examples of the way in which comparative study of the "Songs" themselves puts us on the track of interpretation.

We now come to the MSS. about which, as you know, I hold strong views. When the almost universal habit of Blake's nineteenth-century editors of rewriting him from his MSS. was finally killed by Dr Sampson's great Clarendon Press edition of 1905, he unfortunately (as it seems to me) divided Blake's work into "poetry, prose and the prophetic books." This was certainly not a division which Blake would have sanctioned, and it goes far to obliterate the extremely important distinction between printed, engraved, and manuscript writings, which I am so grateful to your Everyman text for at last emphatically re-establishing.

Of the three forms in which Blake's work has come to us the engraved books are the only entirely and finally authorised works. Even these vary from copy to copy and thus register the changes of his mind. His printed works, except his exhibition Catalogue of Pictures, were definitely not authenticated by him at all. The "Poetical Sketches" were published by his friends as unrevised, and the "French Revolution" only exists in one copy, probably a proof.

The MSS. cover every possible degree of authenticity and authentic rejection except the final passing for publication. There is not one of which we can say, or even guess, that he would have made no further emendation before giving it to the world, and there are many which it is quite certain he never intended for publication at all. It is true that some of his MSS. were carefully copied out and that others, such as the "Additions" to his catalogue, 1810, probably only remained in MS. because the failure of his exhibition gave no opportunity for an enlarged edition of his catalogue. But even in these cases Blake would probably have made changes before printing or engraving—for he practically always did—and it ought to be realised that they are not final—and, what is still more important (for there was probably no

finality for a mind like Blake's), they are not published. To my mind it is quite certain that Blake would not have grudged the labour of engraving his "Four Zoas" MS. if he had not discarded it when or before he determined to write and engrave the "Milton" and "Jerusalem." The fact that he did not actually destroy the MS., but presented it in the last year of his life to Linnell, is not evidence that he authorised it as it stood. No one who has seen the MS. can think of it as a final and completed work. He kept it by him so long as he had any hopes of making use of the material. He no doubt admired the draughtsmanship of the illustrations—he would have been a poor critic if he had not—and probably he considered that the MS., although unsuccessful, contained (as it certainly does) much beautiful poetry and much of exegetical value. But great as is its value to the student and critic, surely it quite definitely does not rank as a finished and authorised utterance comparable to the works he spent untold toil in making permanent for all time by his glorious engraved and illuminated texts. This is not to say that the "Four Zoas" is worse poetry than "Milton" and "Jerusalem." It may be (some of it no doubt is) better; but better or worse, it is certainly uncompleted and unauthorised as a Blake text.

This matter becomes of critical importance when we come to the MS. book with which any student of the "Songs of Experience" has so much to do. Blake believed that to be angry and not to express one's anger was to breed poison. But we all know that to express it to the man who provokes it is not always either safe or wise. He, therefore, often used his notebook to let off his rancour in bitter or witty little verses or epigrams. Sometimes he "gets rid" of some bit of coarse fun or some erotic whim in the same way. Angels might understand and smile, but these entries were not meant for jostlers "in the street." Such are the purposes for which he came to use the book. But his first use of it for MS. was, in a mood of fiercer passion and suffering, to write a Song that rings out like the cry of a hurt creature. It was no ordinary enemy or

ordinary friend this time but the wife of his heart that had wounded him. His "Emanation" had suddenly become "a vegetated mortal Wife," and his cry of pain opened the flood-gates of a great river of poetry that poured out in song after song of disillusionment and grief until the sensitive mind was eased. Yet still the music flowed on, and did not cease until it had added to our language many beautiful poems, some of them amongst the greatest in our tongue. It was from this burst of song that he selected the best poems and, making them still better, engraved them with a few others as the "Songs of Experience."

All this I shall tell you about in Part III of my book ; for notwithstanding the great historic and biographical interest of the MS. (an interest which continually deepens and intensifies as we explore it) the fact remains that though it is certainly "Blake," and in a sense even more so than the "Songs" themselves, it is not a "Work" of Blake's in the sense that the engraved "Songs of Innocence and of Experience" is one of his works. The "Songs" are the Poet's own selection and are without any question the right selection. They are his exhibition, his palace, his book, whereas the MS. is his workshop ; and though it is an inestimable privilege to have the opportunity of looking through the window at Blake as he works, and though we cannot afford to throw away one scrap that fell from his hand, we do a manifest injustice by exhibiting his chips side by side with his masterpieces—not only to the masterpieces, but as I shall hope to show, even more still to the chips.

That the danger of misunderstanding is no imaginary one is witnessed by no less a pen than Mr Chesterton's. He discovers it to be a sign of Blake's madness that he repeats meaningless remarks many times over in different contexts. He airily suggests as many as ten times over. But that is Mr Chesterton's way of talking. The passages he gives as instances are not repeated, even in the MSS., nearly as often as he says, and not once in Blake's published works. Incidentally they are all entirely rational and easily explained. But that is another

story.¹ Mr Chesterton is probably neither much more, nor much less, careless than a large number of readers. He is only a great deal cleverer and more likely to be listened to. And his errors blazoned forth from the housetops by his genius are doubtless common to many humbler denizens of the streets, and those of us who hold literary justice dear should take warning.

I am afraid Mr Keynes's achievement in collecting practically the entire surviving output of Blake's pen may for the moment have made matters worse in this particular respect. By repeating every version of every poem and even recording every deleted line and word (necessary as it was that this should be done) he sometimes makes the poems Blake was least satisfied with, and perhaps finally rejected, appear the oftenest.² I do not suggest that either Dr Sampson or Mr Keynes failed to specify them as MSS., but by printing them in exactly the same type and form, and by adopting an order (chronological in Mr Keynes's case) which makes the reader pass from Engraved to MS. or Print and back again many times, the average reader is nearly certain to conceive that they all had pretty much the same authenticity for Blake, which I earnestly deny. The mistake originated with the editors of Blake's own century who often failed even to mention that a poem came from a MS., and unfortunately it has never been combated with sufficient clearness and decision until this year, and in your edition. May it have all the popularity it so well deserves. Every page is a piece of work and a piece of Blake.³

¹ *Vide* "Quest," October 1911. "The So-called Madness of William Blake." By Joseph Wicksteed.

² Even in the single volume "Nonesuch" Blake, where the "Songs of Experience" are not repeated among the MS. poems, we get the two versions of the "Mirtle Tree"; and as MS. and print and engraved works are still printed in the same form and type, this abandoned theme assumes a misleading importance.

³ In spite of this edition the habit of regarding all Blake's work as equally authentic seems likely to persist. Mr Lindsay, in his recent valuable essay to a re-issue of the

I have next the pleasant task of testifying to the extraordinary value to scholarship of the two editions mentioned—Dr Sampson's edition of the lyrical poems, 1905, and Mr Keynes's three "Nonesuch" volumes. Without them my own work, for whatever it may be worth, would have been impossible. There is scarcely a page which is not directly indebted to one or other of these monumental labours. Let me give an instance of the value of MS. minutely reproduced as Mr Keynes reproduces it. In the middle of the "Island in the Moon" (a MS. that some Blake lovers would almost prefer had been lost, because, failing to regard it as MS. they lose three-quarters of its interest) are two pages that rank amongst the most interesting Blake has left us. Towards the end of this comical fragment of irresponsible satire we suddenly come across a song of exquisite and enduring beauty. It is the picture of the Charity children entering St Paul's. I feel sure that Blake began without the least presentiment that he was writing a great song. He started on the first theme that came into his head, which happened to be a picturesque scene he had recently witnessed. A few pages earlier he had begun a song, "I cry my matches as far as Guildhall," which might easily have developed into a song of innocence if there had been more to the picture. But in this case the image grew and the muse took charge, and the words "holy" and "innocent" made an atmosphere which continued to prevail as the picture unfolded.

*Upon a holy thursday their innocent faces clean
The children walking two & two in grey & blue & green
Grey headed beadies walkd before with wands as white as snow
Till into the high dome of Pauls they like thames waters flow.*

This last beautiful image finally conquers all spirit of vulgar hilarity
"Poetical Sketches" (The Scholartis Press, 5 New Oxford Street), criticises them exactly as one would criticise finished and authenticated work—speaking of a "slovenly violence of rhythm" and so forth—whereas it is probably because of such defects that Blake studiously avoided responsibility for the work.

and comical satire which had hitherto been the prevalent notes of the story, and Blake sets out whole-heartedly to write a second verse on the scene within the church :

*O what a multitude they seemd, these flowers of London town
Seated in companies they sit with radeance all their own
The hum of multitudes were there but multitudes of lambs
And all in order sit waiting the chief chanters commands.*

This last line is so clumsy that one can hardly doubt it describes an actual scene. Blake wrote it like that because he had seen it like that; but after he had written another verse he altered it to the beautiful line we find in "Innocence," "Thousands of little girls & boys raising their innocent hands."¹ The next verse was first written :

*Then like a mighty wind they raise to heavn the voice of song
Or like harmonious thunderings the seats of heavn among
When the whole multitude of innocents their voices raise
Like angels on the throne of heavn raising the voice of praise.*

Lifted now to heaven in spirit he begins a fourth verse :

Let cherubim & seraphim now raise their voices high.

But the verse did not "come," and deleting both this line and the whole of the third verse, he begins again with the two lines :

*Then like a mighty wind they raise to heavn the voice of song
Or like harmonious thunderings the seats of heavn among,*

and finishes with two lines that assume that we have seen the children

¹ There is no way of reproducing in type all the subtleties discernible in a MS. This revised line fills up the space between the second and third verses, showing that the third verse had already been written when the line was substituted—as will be seen by those who examine the photographic reproductions at p. 209.

"like angels on the throne of heavn," although he has deleted the lines :

*Beneath them sit the revrend men the guardians of the poor
Then cherish pity lest you drive an angel from your door.*

The almost accidental occurrence of the significant word "innocent" in the first line worked a kind of magic in Blake's mind, and it is scarcely possible to doubt that we see here the origin of that wonderful series of child pictures of "Innocence" that was to make him for ever famous. Although nothing in the context leads up to the poem or prepares one to find a song of such singular beauty, the MS. makes it clear that Blake was actually composing this song as he sat—adding, deleting, and arranging as he proceeds. Indeed, this must have been the case, for one can hardly imagine Blake deliberately copying so beautiful a poem into so grotesque a story. It is clearly a visitation of the Holy Ghost taking him unawares and unprepared, and when he descends again to earth it is in a spirit remote indeed from the foolish fantasies of his story. After this the absurd company, in whose midst we still find ourselves, remain in silence (as well they might) for a solid quarter of an hour. (Blake knew well enough that something had happened.) And then one of them sings a beautifully contrasted song of the country, the images of the great Cathedral giving place to hill and green where children are allowed to laugh their happiness and joy, in the company of birds until the sunset glow of twilight. This, too, was composed as he wrote. But there follows something different. Two little verses of ominous thought and tragedy follow, that Blake had perhaps sung before. They are written without alteration or corrections, and except for "O's" and "And's" are nearly identical with the poem called in "Innocence" "The Little Boy lost." They do not, however, explain themselves without the illustration or the verses subsequently engraved as "The Little Boy found." The meaning of the double poem has already been suggested and will be discussed later. It only needs to be noted here that the last line—"And

away the vapour flew”—is mysterious, because we have been told of no “vapour” and its disappearance is quite unexplained. In the “Songs of Innocence” we learn that it was some sort of will-o’-the-wisp and that it vanishes with the child’s surrender to grief. This appearance of vision as a consequence of grief is a most characteristic figure of Blake’s deeper mind—connected, as I believe, with the experience of his brother’s death, which took place early in the same year. But however we explain the appearance of these verses in the “Island,” I think they show that Blake had already pondered grief and disillusion, and that we have therefore in this interesting page of a somewhat absurd MS. the germ of the present work as it deals with both Innocence and Experience.

It is true that already in the Poetical Sketches we find a very clear anticipation of two of the Songs of Innocence (the “Laughing Song” and “The Ecchoing Green”) in the Song beginning:

I love the jocund dance,

and it is notable that the word “innocent” is twice used in it. But though there may be a few anticipations in the Sketches, the poems as a whole certainly have not captured the mysterious quality of genius in flower which is common to these three MS. poems and to the other Songs of Innocence.¹ Indeed, I am not sure but that it was the mood of relaxation so obvious in the “Island” that led Blake to the discovery of his own true power.

The last page of this MS. shows that Blake has conceived the idea of etching the poems, an idea he elsewhere attributes to the suggestion of his brother’s spirit seen in imagination.²

¹ An early form of the “Laughing Song” was written on the fly-leaf of a copy of the Poetical Sketches, but apparently not by Blake.

² “An Island in the Moon,” though it is in no sense a great work, may possibly represent a great idea. In “The Gates of Paradise” we see the whole of human life before and after birth, and even after death, represented as sordid and tragic with one great

You are, I believe, still hardly convinced that I am right in departing from Blake's own order of the Songs. But consider the facts. Blake had no determined order so long as the "Songs of Innocence" stood alone. Every issue was different. When he added the "Songs of Experience" he clearly had the idea which other poets, such as Wordsworth, have had, of building them into a larger unity. But as Lamb said to Crabb Robinson concerning this attempt of Wordsworth's,¹ "There is only one good order—and that is the order in which they were written. That is the history of the poet's mind." In Blake's case this strictly chronological order is only discoverable (or partly discoverable) in the songs of "Experience." So that his own various arrangements, especially for the "Songs of Innocence," must be given due consideration. Unfortunately, as you know, the order which he definitely wrote down as the right order was only followed by him in one issue, and by far the commonest order is quite different and later. Nevertheless, there remains no doubt that he often uses his order as a commentary on the poems.

What I have done is to choose an order which I thought best for exposition, always having regard to Blake's various orders in "Innocence" and to the order of composition in "Experience." Sometimes I feel sure his order is like his colouring, experimental and artistic rather than expository; but it is often more. In one issue, for instance, he prints "The Fly" and then "The Tyger," extreme weakness and extreme strength. Then he sandwiches between them "The Angel," a poem quite unlike either except that it begins with excessive weakness and ends with excessive strength. So long as "Innocence" is alone, "The break through into Eternity (Pl. 13). Similarly Blake may have intended to show in "An Island" the utter emptiness of days and nights of social life, with one brilliant flash of reality and poetry that leaves it changed. Even if he did not intend this, it is certainly the effect produced by the MS.; and if it does not represent an idea, it is not the less significant as a fact. Blake might gambol with an idle pipe, but genius was haunting his steps and sooner or later he must yield to its call.

¹ Quoted in a letter to Dorothy Wordsworth on 20th February 1826.

Blossom" is generally near "The Lamb," the two representing creation in its human and in its divine aspect. But when Blake added "Experience," "The Blossom" changed its company and finally settled down to that of "The Little Black Boy" and "The Chimney Sweeper," a most significant association. The interesting explanation you give of Blake's one authentic (but practically unobserved) order is only one of the fascinating excursions into the subject which are open to the Blake lover with the aid of Sampson's 1905 edition, or, better still, with Keynes's *Bibliography*.

My own order is based on the division into "Songs of Love" and "Songs of Thought," which is almost the same as saying "Songs of Girls" and "Songs of Boys." But I have also made groups of the lighter "Songs of Innocence" to open and the most serious "Songs of Experience" to close their respective books.

I cannot close my "preface" without acknowledging a debt, which I share with you, to Mr Geoffrey Keynes for the loan of his fine photographs of the Rossetti MS. book: first to you (from whom my interest in it originated), and later, when my own studies of it became so close and intimate, to myself. There is no finality in the editorship of Blake, as the best friends of Blake scholarship best know; and there is no truer friend of scholarship than Mr Keynes.

To the kindness of the family of the late Mr W. A. White of Brooklyn I and my readers are under a debt of gratitude for giving my publishers facilities for photographing the seventeen pages of the MS. Book that concern the student of "Experience." Mr Sydney Cockerell, curator of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, has kindly granted facilities for the photographing of three pages of "An Island in the Moon" MS. Mr Lawrence Binyon has given facilities for photographing from copies of the *Songs of Innocence* and of *Experience* in the British Museum Print Room. Mr T. H. Riches has most generously given me permission to

take some of my reproductions from one of his very fine copies of the "Songs of Innocence and of Experience." Above all, I have to thank my old friend Miss Carey for allowing me to have in my possession for several weeks, and to make reproductions from, her singularly beautiful early copy of the Songs—one of the most beautiful Blake ever did.

One of my most important debts in criticism is to you for your success in converting me to the view that "The Marriage" is later than the "Songs."¹ As you pointed out two years ago and more, in one of your first letters to me, Blake's exuberance in "The Marriage" is not mere youthfulness, but is due to the sense of having achieved a great synthesis, which he no doubt believed, at the time, to be a final one. The very last stratum of the Songs shows in some ways the nearest approach to "The Marriage," which they were probably written after. But throughout the MS. of Experience we are constantly coming across ideas that naturally develop into ideas in "The Marriage," but which I cannot conceive as coming after it was written.

One cannot be too grateful for the pioneer labours of Blake's recent academic editors, but these have ploughed the rock of Blake's highlands and have only made it seem more than ever probable that they will never become other than thinly tracked regions from plain to plain. Their traffic may perhaps be in precious ores, but the richest poetic and artistic rewards will still accrue to intensive cultivation of the already fertile plains. Here it has been my lot to work in rich forests and vineyards scarcely touched by Mr Damon and falling entirely outside the scheme of Mr Sloss and Mr Wallis. Indeed, so far as I know little attempt has been made since Mr Ellis's edition of the Songs in 1893 to elucidate their deeper meanings. To this edition I am principally indebted for the long-continued habit of thinking of the Songs as more than childish ditties. No doubt I have almost unconsciously absorbed some of Mr

¹ Probably composed before the last songs of Experience and before they were engraved, but certainly after the "Experience" MS.

Ellis's ideas. But there is no man to whom it is more difficult to define one's obligation than to him. He knew his Blake as no one had ever done before, and as few have done since, and his enthusiasm and suggestiveness have put us all in his debt. But he grasped only half of Blake's doctrine of the imagination. "All things Begin and End in Albion's Ancient Druid Rocky Shore," as Blake reiterates in "Jerusalem." And if we take Blake's texts and designs, and the eye- and ear-witnessed records of his life as being in this instance the "Rocky Shore," all criticism must not only begin, but must end there. Mr Ellis confidently sailed away on his own imagination—probably believing himself justified by Blake—till he left us in the end, with his own symbolic system, his own original version of the text, and his own fictitious life of Blake. It was a warning to all subsequent students that however indispensable imagination is to the interpretation, the criticism, or the reconstruction of Blake's text or life, it is only legitimate in so far as it enables us to return to the text or life: to the actual lines left by Blake's pen, pencil, brush, or graver, or to the authenticated records of his acts and sayings—to find them as we left them, but speaking in clearer tones or more living eloquence. It was in reading Mr Foster Damon's important work that I first realised the very significant fact that Water in Blake's early symbolism is connected with the bodily life. And it was you who pointed out to me the repeated emphasis of the tree as a symbol in Blake's early designs, clearly one of the many symbols for the "vegetable" or instinctive life. No doubt there is very much more I have subconsciously absorbed from both books and conversations about Blake, a debt which lack of memory precludes from definite acknowledgment.

The mention of Mr Ellis's edition calls to my mind an old and personal debt which I must give myself the pleasure of acknowledging here. It is nearly thirty years since my friend and cousin, Mrs Robert Garnett, gave me a copy of this beautiful, if inexact, hand-painted facsimile of the "Songs of Innocence and of Experience," which has been a

cherished possession and companion ever since. Indeed, I think you must share with Mrs Garnett the responsibility for my writing of this book.

Lastly, I wish to refer to a pregnant remark of Mr Lawrence Binyon's in his sequel to Mr Darrell Figgis's fine book on Blake as an artist. Referring to the meanings of Blake's designs in the prophetic books, he says that, whatever their meaning, one feels that they are themselves greater than their meaning. This, which is true of all great poetry, is peculiarly so of Blake's art both as a poet and a painter. 'Hamlet' and 'Lear' are greater than anything in them. There is some stupendous greatness in their expression which is not the same as what they express. But what they express is also grand, and would appear so even with far less grandeur of expression. In Blake's case we are so often left with the expression without understanding exactly what is expressed that we are more than ever impressed by the greatness of the former. The triple Hecate means something we are sure, but we are so satisfied with the form that we hardly want to ask the content. And yet it is true that Blake's beauty and grandeur without its sense is the vestige or echo of a greatness dead ; to understand it is to recover the living voice. To me it is an instance of what you will discover to be a constant theme in the pages that follow. Blake always begins on earth, and after rising to vision returns to earth to find it something new. That is the meaning of "The Tyger." The last verse is outwardly the first verse nearly repeated. But what a universe separates their meaning ! So we return from interpretation to find Blake's pictures or poems outwardly the very same as before : not one beauty or thought has escaped. But the pipings of the wren have become the symphony of a master, fraught with a higher life and passion.

Blakists, whether they agree or disagree, combine together to produce a kind of ferment of creative effort and diligent labour, and, as Blake

himself would most fervently claim, our "enemies" are often amongst our best spiritual friends. So in conclusion let me once more acknowledge my debt to you not only for the friendship of your constant agreement, but also, and not less, for that of your occasional disagreement.

Yours beyond the Gates,

JOSEPH WICKSTEED

LONDON, *November 1927*

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

§ I. THE SONGS AND THEIR SINGER

Two periods of Blake's life were filled with so fair a happiness that they have left life itself the fairer, and we can still drink from the fountains of joy they opened. The first period was the spring of early married happiness when two rare spirits, living in almost anchorite simplicity, and with no treasures of possession but their own young bodies and their own rare minds, recovered in themselves the Earthly Paradise of poetic vision.

Even these years had their pulse of joy and sorrow, which seem to have kneaded their plastic characters into strength and maturity. They had no children, but after some years there came into the world, almost without observation, one of the most beautiful things that has ever been made—a little coloured picture-book for children, filled with childish, pretty verses and quaint, brightly-coloured pictures. Even the lettering was sometimes coloured and was always lovely, becoming itself one of the most exquisite decorations that has ever covered a page.¹

But, in point of fact, it was no child's book, and beneath its childlike face was a many-sided splendour of vision and technique that still astonishes and enthralls all who have ever gone into the book and lived there.

Then followed a period of more troubled and often darker days,

¹ Blake does not appear to have coloured the whole page in his earliest issues. The original British Museum copy, which is made up of at least three issues, shows good examples of the different styles, the earliest always avoiding any colour on the text.

and finally a slowly deepening Winter of the mind. It seems impossible for spirits of any magnitude to live more than a few years upon this earth without their having forced upon them the necessity for self-assertion, and with self-assertion begins struggle and disappointment, not only with the world, but with themselves and those most deeply loved. So, during the succeeding years, evidences are not wanting that both Catherine and William were engaged in that stern endeavour, which in some form comes to most of us, to make for ourselves room to live and breathe and grow in a world that was not fashioned for our especial accommodation. It was at the beginning of this period that a second series of darker, deeper, and sometimes nobler songs was written to supplement the first—and the two were then issued in one book as the “Songs of Innocence and of Experience, Shewing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul.”

To live as William Blake's wife was a task for no ordinary woman. To dwell with him day and night so as never to fail him in his ecstatic vision of womanly goodness; to give him all that he needed and yet to keep for herself some individuality; to retain the respect upon which both loyalty and devotion depend while responding to every demand of body or soul which an eighteenth century marriage to a man of genius could propose, was something which no woman could have done who was not at once endowed with rich funds of character and sustained by a great light of satisfied and satisfying love. It was because Catherine Blake achieved this wonder that William Blake also finally succeeded in an achievement so unlike that of any other human mind that for almost a hundred years after his death it was only guessed at here and there, while it is yet so great that only a few rare works of the intervening Victorian literature and art retain a vitality comparable with his. His rich palace of poetry, design, and mystic thought places him, in spite of defects as singular as his achievements, among the very greatest.

It was long years before his genius won to its maturity. Original, startling, and noble as much of the work of Blake's middle life was, there is scarcely a line that does not bear evidence of the bitterness of the struggle. But at last the sky began to clear, and an evening of incredible splendour and peace turned the life of Catherine and William Blake to a glory that shall not fade. For us it is for ever enshrined in the "Job" engravings and the unfinished designs to Dante's "Commedia." But of this second and more immortal happiness the seeds are to be found in the first, nourished indeed by much sun and storm between, but only ripened to harvest because the grain was already sown and germinating before the "blasts of winter" appeared.

For two reasons, therefore, we are obliged to dissect and put under the microscope these early lyrics. Firstly, because they are themselves the outcome of a life and thought of no common order, and their full beauty and power are only to be seen when we know what the life and thought behind them was. And secondly, because without them we can never unravel the full meaning of the final beatitude which Blake attained.

Yet it is no easy task. We must be both subtle and resourceful, and at the same time simple and even gentle. It would be easy to tear them to pieces by importing into them the titanic visions of Blake's later work; but we must not forget that almost contemporary with the "Songs of Innocence" is work that reveals him as a systematic craftsman and thinker such as he could not suddenly have become.¹ It cannot be that the strangeness we sometimes encounter in these early works is wild or accidental, nor is their Elysian beauty

¹ Dr Sampson suggests 1790 for the date of the Tractates, but they are probably earlier. "The Gates of Paradise" was first issued in 1793, and Blake had already written his revealing marginalia to Lavater's "Aphorisms" and Swedenborg's "Divine Love and Wisdom."

and occasional grandeur the gift of chance. It is something systematically arrived at, a welding often of tersest thought and truest art. Fortunately Blake's art has a peculiar robustness, and, however much we examine and analyse these morning lyrics for their thought, they retain for us their mysterious and delicate beauty which no examination can either destroy or explain.

Glancing first at the titles we shall find certain strands of thought or mood. Besides the great vertical cleavage into Innocence and Experience, there are horizontal divisions, or strata, repeated in both. Some of the songs in the two books have the same title: "Holy Thursday," "Nurse's Song," "The Chimney Sweeper." Others obviously correspond: "Infant Joy" and "Infant Sorrow," "The Divine Image" and "The Human Abstract,"¹ "The Lamb" and "The Tyger." Others again, if not actually intended as counterparts, gain in significance by being contrasted, such as "The Ecchoing Green" and "London," and especially "The Little Black Boy" and "The Little Vagabond." "A Little BOY Lost" of "Experience" was clearly suggested by "The Little Boy 'lost' and 'found'" (really one poem) of "Innocence": and when Blake had nearly finished engraving the "Songs of Experience" he could not resist adding "A Little GIRL Lost," although he had already transferred "The Little Girl Lost" and "The Little Girl Found" from the "Songs of Innocence." There are consequently two very different poems on the subject in the "Songs of Experience." But it is true in this case, as in the others, that the later poem is to be read in relation to the earlier. Put into one word it may be said that the meaning of these rather confusing titles is simply this: Little boys may be lost and may be found, and little girls may be lost and may be found, but occasionally there is *A* little boy or *A* little girl who is lost

¹ "The human Image" in the MS. Cf. "A Divine Image," etched but never printed by Blake, p. 204.

and not found. Or again, to put it in somewhat more Blakean form, Innocence normally passes into Experience there to find a higher innocence; but if this passage is brutally and unsympathetically impeded by "parents" and "priests," innocence is lost indeed.

There are more comprehensive groups, expressing moods which sometimes coalesce. Simplest of all is the purely lyrical mood of Innocence comprising "The Shepherd," "Spring," the "Laughing Song." An only slightly more serious vein appears in "The Ecchoing Green," the "Nurse's Song," "Holy Thursday," "A Cradle Song," and "Infant Joy." "The Lamb" is filled with a tender solemnity, and there is a suggestion of grief in "The Blossom," "On Another's Sorrow," and "A Dream"; while in "The Divine Image," "The Little Black Boy," "The Chimney Sweeper," "The Little Boy lost and found," we find ourselves deep in the region of human tears and of Divine compassion. Lastly, in "Night," we have Blake's first lyrical attempt to reconcile the joyous and tragic aspects of existence. The harmony, as expressed in the surface meaning, is childlike enough, but possibly only covers a rarer and more original theme. In any case he was to proceed in later works to trial upon trial of his strength in wrestling with the omnipresent problem of evil until he achieves his latest answer in the finale of the Job drama and the incomplete and dimly understood designs to Dante's "Paradiso."

So far Innocence. Experience, too, has its moods, varying from grief at the killing of a fly, or the mild cynicism of the "Nurse's Song," to the prophetic denunciation of Society in "London," the horror of "A Little BOY Lost" (Is he actually burnt alive?), and the grim spirit of exultant murder in "A Poison Tree"; while Blake's renewed attempt on the problem of evil produced in "The Tyger" one of the greatest of all his creations. Fortunately we are not entirely without clue to the origin of these various strands in Blake's early works.

When Blake began writing these songs it was not, I think, with the idea of making them into a book. Several of the earlier series appear in a manuscript satire, where they seem intended to put to shame the absurdities of a literary coterie. One was written in manuscript on the fly-leaf of his earlier poems, sponsored not by himself, but by a group of admirers, probably by the very coterie he later left and satirised. In this earlier work there are some indications that he was consciously imitative and deliberately attempting to become one of the English poets. This he seems to have seen through when he saw through the friends who praised him. And if his first great song broke forth in reaction against the circle who subscribed to publish his earlier efforts, the world of literature owes them a debt that should not be forgotten. But whatever may have been the cause, or combination of causes, Blake now began to sing as a bird sings, as a child sings, and as all other greatest poets sing, not because he wanted to be a poet, but because he wanted to sing. Later, as was right, he wanted to sing about something. But the pure lyrical impulse remained with him for some years, and though it gradually subsided, only occasionally to break forth again in pristine power, it lasted long enough to become the vehicle of some of his tenderest and mightiest ideas, so that among forty-five little songs about childhood and adolescence (for he never strays far from his theme) Blake has created several of the supreme lyrics of our tongue.

Possibly his happy but childless marriage may have had a peculiar reaction on his artistic mind and turned it more persistently to the theme of childhood than if it had been filled with the natural satisfaction of fatherhood. For a time all his ideas seem to have been focused round childhood and youth, its joys and sorrows. So, whether he paints pictures of happy human life, or speaks in parables of animals, whether he treats of Divine or human love or of human wrongs, there is almost always a child or children in his mind with whom is associated

the strong appeal of innocence, of tender affection, or of helplessness, and, in the later series, of deep social wrong.

At what stage he wrote his wonderful "Introduction," describing himself as the piper, it is impossible to say; but by its means he makes his "songs" into a "book," a process which the poem itself describes. He suggests, even in detail, the different strands of which the book is composed; songs of laughter, songs of weeping, songs in which tears and joys are one, or again songs that are nothing but songs, songs with an inspired theme, and finally songs earnestly wrought with meaning and art into a book.

Three of the songs that were originally included in this first book were afterwards taken out of it and included in the "Songs of Experience." Two of these I shall include in my exposition of Innocence. But even without them we can trace a definite passage into the "State" Blake later characterised as Experience. These, with others that were not transferred, will be treated definitely as *passage* songs, the study of which will initiate us into the two primary ideas associated with Blake's "Experience"—the Thought-experience and the Love-experience. The thought-experience concerns the idea of God or some supreme reality (such as Conscious Existence in "The Fly," or Imagination in "The Chimney Sweeper"), and is dealt with in poems about little boys.¹ The love-experience is treated in poems about little girls, or flowers and gardens representing women. Accordingly "The Little Boy 'lost' and 'found'" appears to me to be a passage poem describing an independent thought discovery, the most fundamental of all, that the Divine is always with us. "The Blossom," in form the most childlike of all the "Songs," is a poem describing the love-experience, closely akin in this respect to "The Little Girl 'Lost' and 'Found,'" transferred to "Songs of Experience." With these may be contrasted "The School Boy," the only

¹ In "The Fly" the little boy is in the Illustration only.

one of Blake's transferred songs which I shall keep for treatment among Blake's "Songs of Experience." For while "The Blossom" and "The Little Girl Found" claim experience as the crowning of the State of Innocence, "The School Boy" claims Innocence itself as the most fundamental of all experiences.

"The Voice of the Ancient Bard" (originally a "Song of Innocence") is a passage poem. It appears to me definitely an invitation to Experience and an early study for the remarkable "Introduction" to the later book. For the moment it will be unnecessary to say more about the development of Blake's ideas connected with Experience. These will be explained in the Foreword to Part II, and in the brief introductions to the sections.

§ 2. VOCABULARY AND RHYMES

Blake's vocabulary in the "Songs of Innocence" was purposely simple. He aimed at making with his "rural pen" a trickling stream of verse of childlike innocence. And without any radical change of form he succeeds in adapting it to the speed and anger of a torrent passing over the rocks of Experience.

In the whole book there are about 5000 words, including the titles and every repetition. "Innocence" proper contains about 2300 of these: the three songs later transferred to "Experience" another 700, and "Experience" without these about 2000. The whole vocabulary is almost exactly 1000 words, rather more than a quarter being common to both parts.

More than 80 per cent. of the words in both parts are monosyllables, "Innocence" having slightly the larger proportion. The whole of "Experience" contains only 33 three-syllabled words: "Innocence" about 27¹ and the transferred songs about 7. "Experience" contains

¹ I give all these figures as close approximations because there is some room for difference of opinion as to what constitutes a metrical syllable, and there are similar questions

4 four-syllabled words, "caterpillar," "generation," "invisible," and "humility." "The Little Girl Lost" one, "futurity"; and the whole of "Innocence" one, "harmonious." But it is interesting that this one occurs in "Holy Thursday," which was the first of all the songs to be written, and contains 9 three-syllabled words and altogether 29 per cent. polysyllables (counting repetitions), a larger percentage than any of the other songs except "Infant Sorrow," which has thirty, and "The Blossom," which is unique, being more than half words of two syllables. Very few of the other songs have a quarter of their words more than one syllable, and one, "The Angel," has less than 7 per cent.

We may take it therefore that Blake wrote "Holy Thursday" before he had developed what one may call the technique of Innocence. It is not written with a rural pen, and is in some ways the maturest of the earlier songs.

It is clear, then, that Blake's childlikeness was partly self-imposed, and when he requires—either for his meaning, or his atmosphere, or his song—a word of somewhat rarer character, he shows mastery in finding and in using it. Such phrases as:

The painted birds laugh in the shade . . .
Under a cruel eye outworn . . .

are not less masterly than

harmonious thunderings the seats of heaven among.

The many great expressions in "Experience," such as:

the chartered Thames . . .
fed with cold and usurious hand . . .
could twist the sinews of thy heart . . .

in the case of vocabulary—when to count a word twice that is used as a noun and as a verb or adjective. When the same word occurs more than once in the same poem, I count it as one, but when it comes again in another poem I count it again.

Dare frame thy fearful symmetry . . .
 the mind-forgd manacles I hear . . .
 that might controll the starry pole . . .
 the pale Virgin shrouded in snow . . .
 her thorns were my only delight . . .
 blights with plagues the marriage-hearse . . .
 till some blind hand shall brush my wing . . .
 but his loving look . . . all her tender limbs with terror shook;

and many others are not the work of a mere apprentice. In the MS. book we find:

And in thy horrid ribs dare steep
 In the well of sanguine woe
 In what clay and in what mould
 Were thine eyes of fury rolld

and, one of Blake's greatest couplets:

Or shrink at the little blasts of fear
 That the hireling blows into my ear.

One is divided in mind whether to wonder more at the genius that could fashion, or the craftsman who could reject, such phrases when he did not want them, leaving them among the debris of his workshop.

It was this self-imposed limitation that seems accountable for, or at all events connected with, certain interesting features of his muse. He never appears to avoid the obvious. Indeed the words and the very form and content of his verse often seem to be dictated by the jingling rhymes, especially of "Innocence." But just when the jingle begins to cloy, he relieves us either by some magic expression and picture like:

And sport no more seen
 On the darkening green,

or introduces most characteristically a bad rhyme, or even omits the rhyme altogether as:

Merrily Merrily to welcome in the Year.

His bad rhymes are as effective as they are characteristic, always carrying on the movement and tune while preventing the verse from becoming sugary.

Thus we have on the one hand the obvious and childlike array of bowers and flowers, beams and streams, boys and joys, mothers and brothers, together with rest and nest, mild and child, voice and rejoice, smiles and beguiles, sleeping and weeping, dies and sighs, all introduced almost as though they were ends in themselves worth adding new verses in order to include; and on the other hand we have every form of bad rhyme, such as thrush and bush, weary and merry, name and am or lamb, live and receive, love and grove, blossom and bosom, robin and sobbing, dark and work, fast and lost, joy and by, shade and spread or head, dear and care, face and dress or kiss, peace and distress, lamb and hand, groves and moves, blessing and ceasing, nest and beast, warm and harm, dreadful and heedful, meekness and sickness, spirit and inherit, girl and small, maid and said, crow and you, lick and neck, shade and bed, hum and home, woe and too, gone and moan; and in "Experience," bard and word, return and worn, stood and viewed, worm and storm, heath and death. Then we have other kinds of imperfect rhyme, such as followed and led, injury and misery, reason and teasing, distress and thankfulness, sky and merrily, fly and mystery, joy and poverty, and repetitions for rhymes, like read and reed, well and well, be and be, Love and Love; while we find the same rhyme, such as snow and woe, repeated in consecutive verses and constant changes of rhyme scheme from verse to verse. We find a verse with no real rhyme except a double one in the last line:

And I saw it was filled with graves
 And tomb-stones where flowers should be
 And priests in black gowns, were walking their rounds,
 And binding with briars, my joys and desires,

or in the last but one:

Dear Mother dear Mother the Church is cold
 But the Ale-house is healthy & pleasant & warm
 Besides I can tell where I am used well
 Such usage in heaven will never do well.

He is very fond of introducing the auxiliaries (especially do) when they are not grammatically necessary:

The Sun does arise . . .
 Old John . . . does laugh . . .
 Cock does crow . . .
 Starry Jealousy does keep my den . . .
 And their sun does never shine . . .
 If her heart does ake . . .
 Near where the chartered Thames does flow . . .
 My wrath did end . . . did grow . . .
 And the Raven his nest has made.

On the other hand he seems to avoid the use of the auxiliary "to be" with the present participle. "The children walking" he says for the children were walking.

Phrases like "have took," "the feet of angels moves," "while o'er thee thy mother weep," are annoying to some readers, but most will feel that he has a nearly infallible ear for the music of his verse and he never spoils great passages of song by inappropriate mannerisms.

Trying to picture the process of creation one cannot resist the impression that it begins with something that is neither sight nor sound, but a kind of inspired flame of emotion quite individual in

character and associated with a few significant words, but otherwise undefined. And just as Blake saw mighty forms upon a blank wall, or significant scenes upon a clear sheet of paper, which grew and defined themselves as he gazed or worked at them, so these poetic inspirations came first like beams of sunlight or heavy clouds or blasts of prophecy, each with peculiar and specific character, but without defined content until he had found the words and spread the images that filled them out. Their character thus caught, they became permanent and communicable things, never henceforth to be destroyed.

The Piper tells the same tale. A mood of glee without thought or content becomes in a moment of inspiration associated with the word "Lamb." And the word begins a story that is to end in the reed-written book.

§ 3. BLAKE'S SPELLING AND PUNCTUATION

Blake's spelling, punctuation, and use of capitals are peculiar. Capitals, except at the beginning of the line or sentence, are used for emphasis: "Love seeketh not Itself to please." They should always be reproduced in any text. The ampersand & is so characteristic that most modern editors like to reproduce it. It is not (except very occasionally in MS.) used at the beginning of a line or sentence. The fully written "and" when it comes in the middle of a line seems to indicate a slight pause on the previous word either for emphasis or rhythm. Compare, for instance, the last two lines of "On Another's Sorrow":

Till our grief is fled & gone
He doth sit by us and moan,

or the last line of "The Little Vagabond":

But kiss him & give him both drink and apparel.

On the other hand in "The Tyger," where the beat is very imperious, the conjunctions are deliberately subdued even in very conspicuous positions:

And what shoulder, & what art . . .
What dread hand? & what dread feet?

The reader will make similar observations for himself.

Blake's spelling is occasionally illiterate—a fate which many other authors would share if we all had to engrave our own texts. More often it is archaic and artistic, as "tygers" and "desarts." It has become a piety, not altogether without justification, to reproduce even his errors, which seem to bring us nearer his own individual text.

His punctuation is the most peculiar of all. Sometimes it is almost omitted, as in "Holy Thursday"¹ of "Innocence," which is perhaps the loveliest page of print ever produced, and he may have considered that stops would spoil it. It has been suggested that all his stops were primarily decorative, and he certainly prefers full stops to commas and colons to semicolons. But I think they have much more to do with the music and movement of the verse than the decoration. A full stop means a pause and has nothing to do with grammatical construction. I have represented these by commas except at the end of sentences: otherwise I have attempted to reproduce the punctuation exactly. Blake often omits exclamation and interrogation marks and sometimes full stops at the end of his verse or poem. On the other hand he sometimes uses exclamation marks with great zest:

Know that in a former time
Love ! sweet Love ! was thought a crime,

¹ The decoration is so profusely mingled with the text on some pages that it is not always easy to be certain whether stops are merged in it and whether stray leaves or twigs of vegetation are intended to function as stops. The last line in "Holy Thursday" has a semicolon after "pity."

and the query most effectively, if incorrectly, in:

Where are thy father & mother? say?

The use of block capitals in the titles should be reproduced as it is often significant and always characteristic:

"The Little Boy lost," "The Little Boy found," but "A Little BOY Lost," and "A Little GIRL Lost," "EARTH'S Answer," "NURSE'S Song" (S.E.). Only two titles of the "Songs of Innocence" ("HOLY THURSDAY" and "A CRADLE SONG") are entirely in block capitals. Here it is clearly done for the decorative effect, these two being the most conspicuously beautiful pages of print. In the "Songs of Experience" it is almost the rule for the titles to be at least partly in block capitals.

§ 4. THE SYMBOLISM

The symbolism of these early works, as already mentioned in the Preface, is only a little removed from metaphor. When Blake follows "Piping down the valleys wild" with the image "On a cloud I saw a child" he is using a picture to express the fact of inspiration. In a word, the Child on a cloud is his vision of the Muse in Heaven that evokes his song. Half a lifetime later, when he was completing his greatest work in the "Job" designs, he represents, in the second illustration, Jehovah enthroned on the clouds surrounded by the hosts of heaven. This figure he calls "The Angel of the Divine Presence." The meaning is similar if not the same: "What is above is Within." The reallest things in life, the things that make or mar our outward lives and inspire our poetry in word and deed, are the inward visions and conceptions which we may symbolise as happenings on or above the clouds. In "Innocence" the image is simplicity itself, apparently a light and passing metaphor;

but it was the utterance of so fundamental a feature of Blake's mind that it is still there when nearly forty years later he uses it to convey the whole burden of his matured thought on life. In the fourth verse the child disappears, and this is parallel to the disappearance of God (and Satan too) after the seventeenth illustration of the "Job."

Again the meaning, if lighter, is essentially the same. Vision, without which man is nothing, enters and becomes one with us in the life of artistic labour or Christianity. In a sense it leaves us, with nothing but its afterglow, to work out our salvation in the here and the now. But this "here and now" has itself been for ever changed. We are become one with the life of heaven, whether in the writing of a book of songs for children or in the supreme task of realising the life of God on earth.

Meanwhile the "cloud" has come to be used in a variety of ways. It is something within, but it is something hiding the innermost reality, to be broken through before we gain real vision. The child is not in, but on, the cloud, and we can only see him by seeing beyond it. So we have in "Infant Sorrow" of the "Songs of Experience" the "Fiend hid in a cloud," describing the divine spirit cribbed and confined in the flesh. It becomes a fiend because it is hid in the cloud and so cut off from the universal divine, which can only be recovered by vision—vision that pierces the clouds.¹

But not only do the metaphors develop and shift about a centre, there is a constant tendency in Blake's mind to invert them, as Shelley does in "The Revolt of Islam" where the serpent at the beginning represents innocent goodness and the eagle tyrannous power, and so forth. Thus the things that to common understanding seem solid and substantial like the material world, Blake symbolises as water,

¹ In the "Job" the cloud belt is consistently used to mark the division between earth and heaven.

dew, mist. For the material world is in perpetual flux. The things that appear abstract like Reason he symbolises as stone, and finally as mountains (imaginative things are sometimes marble) because of their unyielding character.

What we call the animal life, the life of the flesh whether innocent or gross, he calls the vegetable life, because it is concerned only with growth and reproduction. In his verses and illustrations it is continually expressed as trees, grass, reeds, moss, and so forth. This use of the word "vegetable" is by no means peculiar to Blake, and though there may possibly be some slight element of perversity in many of his inverted metaphors, the inversion is mainly due to a passionate impulse to bring out neglected aspects of truth. He deliberately associates the most tremendous of realities with the gentle and impotent creatures. God is seen in "The Lamb," and Conscious Existence itself is associated with "The Fly." The fierce wild beasts are, it is true, used to symbolise the fierce wildness of the passions, but in "The Little Girl Lost" and "Found" they symbolise sex-love in its most tender and poetic mood.

Blake's use of Night and Morning is more difficult. It is sometimes as clearly not symbolical as it is other times clearly symbolical. When he says in "The Angel":

And I wept both night and day
And he wip'd my tears away
And I wept both day and night
And hid from him my hearts delight

he is clearly using the words to signify "all the time." But in the next verse, when he says:

So he took his wings and fled;
Then the morn blush'd rosy red;

it clearly marks the sudden psychological change in the heroine.

The wonderful song "Night" appears to me to begin definitely in the natural world. But gradually fear creeps into its shadows, and then the hosts of heaven descend to allay them, and we find ourselves in the midst of the battle-ground of good and evil passions until passionate tears lead us to the "immortal day" of the Lamb and to redemption through the cleansing river of life. Everything in nature has become symbolical and spiritual.¹

When we come to "The Little Girl Lost" and its sequel we find practically the same images used entirely symbolically from the first. Both the child's sleep and the wild beasts that surround her in the night are symbolical of states and emotions. In "The Tyger" the "forests of the night" and the "Tyger" himself, beginning probably in the natural world, become finished and perfect symbols though still with roots in nature.

It may be said, then, that most of the "Songs of Innocence" are exactly what they seem—lyrics almost as spontaneous as the songs of the birds, often written originally without any thought (or scarcely any) of ulterior or hidden significance. Others even in "Innocence" and many in "Experience" have scarcely any meaning until we unravel their spiritual meaning. Still more, perhaps, are a harmony in several parts, to hear which is to experience a very exquisite delight. Of none is this more true than of the "Introduction" to the "Songs of Innocence."

§ 5. THE ILLUSTRATIONS

Blake felt that the delicate spirit of these songs escaped when they were reduced to printer's type and printer's ink. He therefore adopted (partly, or wholly originating) a method by which they

¹ A very cryptic and Blakean meaning probably lies beneath these metaphors, and will be discussed below. *Vide* p. 129.

should be written by himself on copper plates in a varnish that resisted the action of acid. In this way the letters could be made to stand out after a corrosive had lowered the general surface of the plate. At the same time that he wrote the text he added decorations and pictures round the margin, or as head- and tail-pieces. These often came to assume great importance so as to cover the larger part of the plate. He engraved, in the same way, a richly decorated title-page to the "Songs of Innocence," and a frontispiece without any text; and when he added the "Songs of Experience" he engraved, besides a title-page and frontispiece, a general title-page to both parts containing the significant sub-title, "Shewing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul."

He and his wife then coloured the prints by hand. In the early copies, only the decoration and illustrations, and not the text, are coloured. But later the colouring is more elaborate generally, and the whole page is sometimes shot with the most exquisite rainbow lights. The effect is particularly beautiful where the text is the chief feature of the plate. From first to last there is an astonishing variety of treatment, making each copy like an independent work. This difference is partly due to the different coloured inks used for printing. The Carey copy, from which many of the reproductions in the present work are taken, is an early one, and pre-eminently beautiful in the expression of the faces, the delicate flesh tints and the moulding of the figures. The colours are never deep, and there are few deep shadows. The older Museum copy, from which others are taken, contains examples of three quite different styles, the early lightly coloured type, a later style in thick opaque pigments, sometimes very effective, and Blake's latest style, printed in reddish-brown ink and painted with water-colours in many rich and brilliant rainbow hues. A third copy used in this edition is in the possession of Mr T. H. Riches, and shows Blake in yet another phase of great interest.

Many of the pages are rich in sumptuous colour, blues and greens and reds and yellows and gold mingling in flame-like profusion. There are indications that the plates were now no longer at their best, which may have led to Blake's lavishing so much of his own hand labour upon them. Some of the texts are inked in letter by letter, and one is carefully rewritten in gold upon a deep blue ground. Probably many more copies were made than we have now any knowledge of, and have gone to light many nursery fires. But if some slight deterioration of the plates was the reason why Blake abandoned the exquisite delicacy of his early treatment, it is hard to regret anything which led to the development of a completely new and in some ways more glorious treatment. I feel sure that he often followed the lead given by the particular print. Where a tree, or a bird, or a figure failed to print, he saw a new scene or design suggested and worked the plate up accordingly. And similarly when some feature came out particularly clearly he delighted to develop it. For nothing is more delightful than his way of bringing out different features of the plate in different copies. Of many of them it may be said that we only know them when we have seen at least four or five different copies. Some of the loveliest and most significant marginal features are only brought out in quite late copies, though they must have been seen by Blake when he originally designed the plate. Certain of the minor figures are so difficult to see that I have chosen some of the illustrations with a view to clearness. In certain instances I think Blake added in ink, or colour, features which made his meaning clearer, and I have considered it legitimate to reproduce these, even though they do not represent his first thought and were not engraved on the plates.

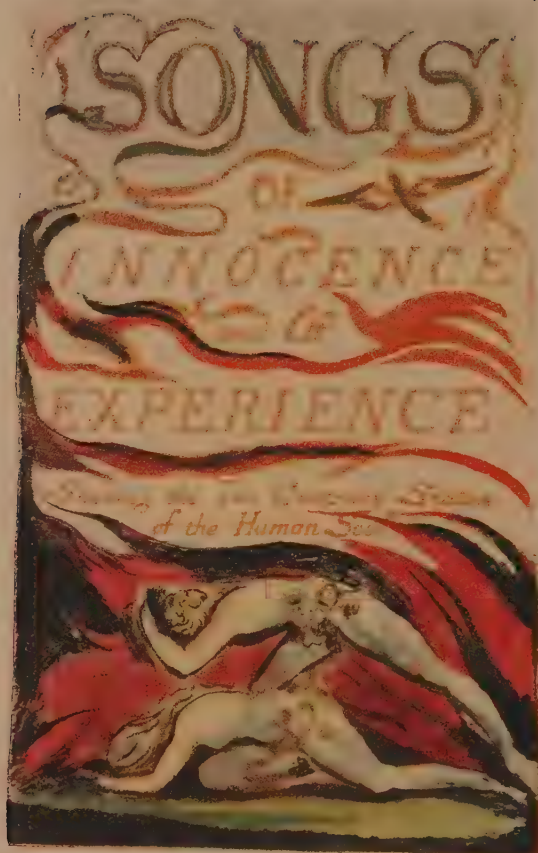
The study of the illustrations alone is one of voluminous interest, but cannot be more than tentatively begun as yet. When the great national museums have accumulated, by purchase or bequest,

an increasing number of examples, and as the art of colour reproduction is carried to greater perfection, and, best of all, if more of the presumably many lost copies are eventually recovered, a delightful field of investigation promises to unfold before future Blake explorers. For it is certain that every stroke of Blake's brush was a motion not only of his master hand, but of his mind and art. It does not follow, as some would have us suppose, that all that was bad in the various issues was the work of Mrs Blake, or that all that was good was actually done by Blake himself. I think he sometimes told her what to do, and she did it with varying success. The flower illustrating "Infant Joy" is very beautifully coloured and delicately worked up in the Carey copy, here reproduced in colour. But its sepals are painted red like the petals, which I find it very difficult to believe could be done by the man who conceived the design, and this is never (so far as I know) repeated. What one imagines to have happened in such a case is that Blake said, "Paint that flower red" (it is always, I believe, painted red). He perhaps told her what red to paint it, and when it was finished, said, "Yes, that's very nice—a little strengthening of the shades—like this—and a touch more here." And then perhaps, "Now go on with this one—a blue wash over the head- and tail-pieces will do for that." On the other hand, Blake himself was always experimental and original, and often angry and depressed. He is more than likely to have spoilt his plates at times. What I cannot conceive is that he ever erred on the side of lightness or by putting mere dabs of colour on the print where it delineates the foliage of a tree, for instance, as we find in certain copies.

From the Macgeorge copy in the British Museum some reproductions have been taken, largely because the dark ink in which it was printed lends itself to reproduction.

The plates chosen here for coloured reproduction are examples of four types. The general title page from the Carey copy is a beautiful

example of Blake's earlier colouring. "Infant Joy," also from the Carey copy, I regard (for the reason given above) as an example of Mrs Blake's work. "The Blossom," from the Riches copy, is a very good example of the more highly coloured page. And the "Holy Thursday" (S.E.) from the older Museum copy is one of the best of Blake's treatments in opaque pigments.

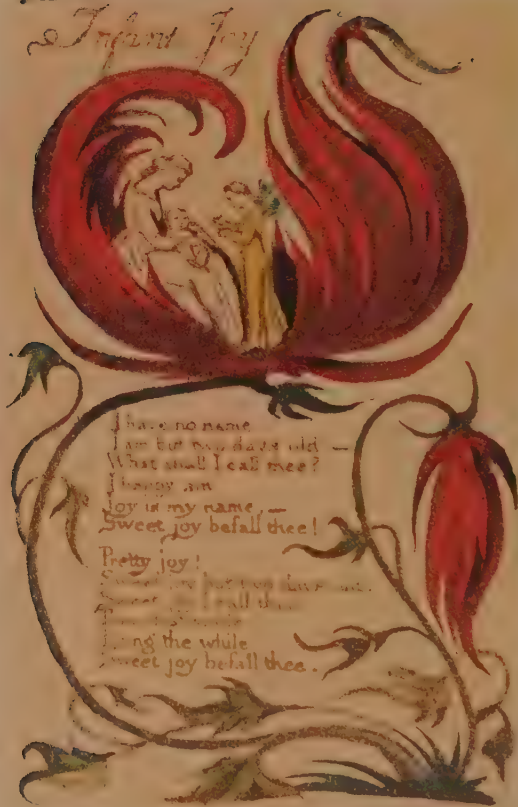


SONGS OF INNOCENCE OF EXPERIENCE

*Containing the two Contrary States
of the Human Soul*

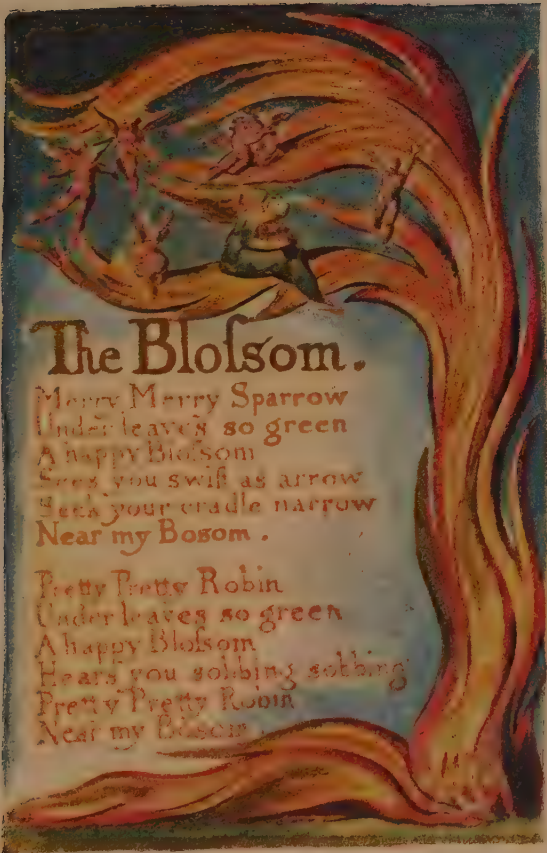


Infant Joy



I have no name
I am but new, & so old —
What shall I call thee?
I happy am
Joy is my name, —
Sweet joy befall thee!

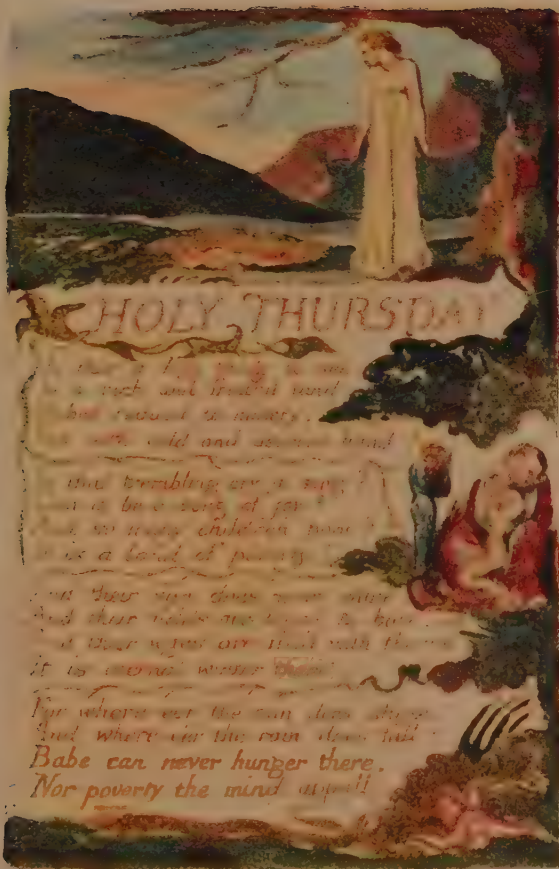
Pretty joy!
Sweet joy befall thee!
Sweet joy befall thee!
Sweet joy befall thee!
Long the while
Sweet joy befall thee.



The Blossom.

Merry Merry Sparrow
Under leaves so green
A happy Blossom
Sees you swift as arrow
Seek your cradle narrow
Near my Bosom.

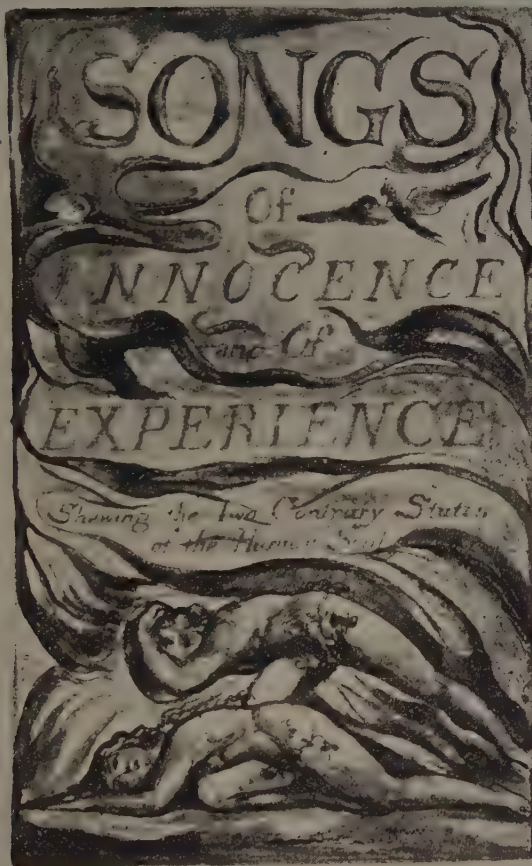
Pretty Pretty Robin
Under leaves so green
A happy Blossom
Hears you sobbing sobbing
Pretty Pretty Robin
Near my Bosom.



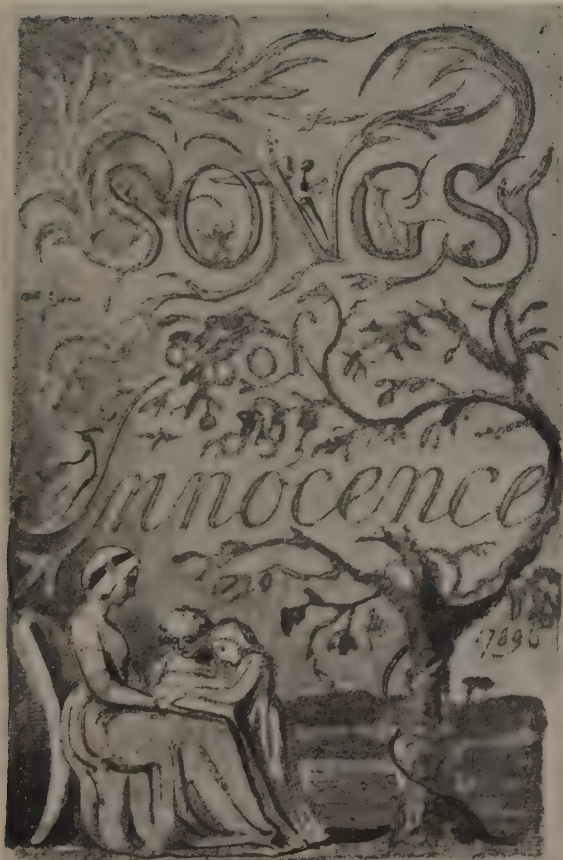
HOLY THURSDAY

There is a woman in our
a rich and fruitful land
but turned to misery,
a cold and ashen hand
that trembles on a rag;
a long long day of fast
for so many children poor
in a land of plenty
and their sun does not shine
and their hearts are heavy to bear
and their way out that with them
it is no more winter there
For where ever the sun does shine
and where ever the corn does fall
Babe can never hunger there,
Nor poverty the mind assault

PART I
SONGS OF INNOCENCE







of The Author: & Printer W Blake.

THE PIPER¹

"INTRODUCTION"

It is possible to read this lovely poem again and again and still to discover new beauties in it. At times it seems to have a slightly symbolical meaning, as though the Piper were the spirit of poetry making the wild vales of this life beautiful with song. But though this idea may possibly have been present with Blake at some point in the poem's gestation, his main interest is in putting into exact and expressive imagery his own experience as the singer of these songs. Every image has a basis in fact, and every word an exact function in producing both the image and the song.

Beginning with the words, we shall find in them a good example of Blake's concentration. "Piping down the valleys" is only four words, but with what matchless economy they are used to produce their effect. By the first, echoes are awakened of Arcady and the god Pan, and the next carries us along with easy and happy motion. The word "the" makes valleys into something generic, like "the country" or "the sea," and valleys itself means more than fields or woods or even hills, while it includes them all. So that in these first four words we have already a wonderful picture and a wonderful movement and song. Then comes the last word of the line, a little strange and unexpected. "Wild" is used in the sense of natural or uncultivated, but it is surely Nature in no purely

¹ This title is not Blake's as will be seen by reference to the plate. But it is convenient to have more specific names for this poem and for the Introduction to the Songs of Experience. I frequently refer to them as the "Piper" and the "Bard" respectively.

pastoral mood. It may be Pan, but can it be Arcady? Does it introduce a distant hint of those "forests of the night" that we are to enter and pass through in "Experience"? If such questions arise, the next line seems deliberately calculated to silence them. The word "wild" has given strength to the picture, but the songs are merely "songs of pleasant glee," and surely we are in Arcady after all.

We are still left expectant. Having heard the song we await the singer. In the third line he appears as the poet himself, and with him the heavenly Muse in vision as a child upon a cloud. The many repetitions of the song which this vision demands are each accompanied by some new mood. The child first laughs as he gives the theme. But when the theme is repeated it moves the child to tears, and when the mere piping is not enough, words adding the quality of thought and feeling call forth the union of tears with "joy." Yet something has been lost. Words can only be sung after the pipe is dropped. And next the vision itself disappears, when its command to write has been heard. We can only sing when we cease to pipe, and we can only write when we wake from dream.

And yet the poet makes it clear that the atmosphere of rural vision remains. The very instruments of his craft are culled from the brooks where his song was first awakened. The reeds that first supplied his pipes now make his pen, and the water they grow from yields his ink.

And all the time there has been progress. We have passed from "pleasant glee" through laughter on to "merry cheer" and then to tears. Next the happy pipe is dropped and the vocal song of "happy cheer" (deeper than "merry cheer") introduces the magic word "joy." Blake constantly associates great joy with tears, and the words and moods are here chosen with conscious purpose to express progression from glee to cheer, from cheer to happiness, and from happiness to joy, each state being something richer than the last.

But the crisis of the poem is when the child on the cloud disappears. It is difficult to make the meaning and reason of this clear, and yet it is so important and characteristic that we less than half understand the poem unless we grasp it. The Child is a mere happy vision inspiring the Poet from without until he begins to work. He then cannot see the child any more for the same reason that we cannot see ourselves. The Child is now something within. It is himself, and the only outside inspiration is now the fact of actual living children on this earth. Their appreciation of the book is once more described by the significant word "joy." Its use now as a verb seems to have the subtle effect of making them take part.

The poem therefore begins upon the wild earth, is lifted for a time to familiar intercourse with a heavenly vision, and ends again upon the earth, though still retaining the note of joy captured at the height of vision.

This is explained by Blake's significant though cryptic line in "Jerusalem":

"All things Begin & End in Albions Ancient Druid Rocky Shore"¹

which, being expanded, amounts to saying that howsoever we may explore the realms of vision we must come back in the end to that hard and narrow age-long way that skirts the margin between Time and Eternity, where Druid sacrifice of humanity is so common, but which is for every man his native earth.

This is the theme of all Blake's greatest work, and in this respect and others "The Piper" carries us in anticipation to Blake's final working out of that theme. The "Introduction" is in fact more than an introduction to the "Songs of Innocence"; it is like an early sonata whose form was to dictate that of the later symphonies, and especially of the greatest symphony of all.

¹ Jerusalem, Ch. 2, also *cf.* 32¹⁵ (46¹⁵).

The parallel between this sonata of "The Piper" and the "Job" symphony is particularly close and illuminating. The first water-colour drawings for the "Job" series were completed by Blake about 1820.¹ It begins with Job and his family worshipping beneath his Tree, the symbol of this life. The next scene shows us, as in the "Piper," a vision upon the clouds, and it is this vision of the powers of heaven and hell which, entering into relations with the earthly man, dictates the terrible but in the end triumphant course of Job's life until it finally disappears (Illustration 18) like the cloud child in the "Piper," because Job has absorbed it into his own active life.²

It disappears from Job's vision to leave his soul flooded with light. "Undeserved" suffering (as he thought his sufferings were) has lost its meaning for him. He has realised that the riches of this world seen in the Spirit are greater than any man ever *deserved*. Job is inspired to return to his poverty in a new spirit towards his fellow men and women that makes him rich indeed, ending with his epic story of Heaven's dealings with him, and his song of glory with his family round the original Tree. And so the Piper, too, after seeing and listening to a heavenly vision that changes and grows, finally loses it as he absorbs it. Then recording it in art, he sings his inspired song "about a Lamb" for the joy of living children upon earth.

It is not necessary to suppose that Blake realised the full greatness of his conception when he wrote this little lyric. He had experienced the fact that the artist, amusing himself with his art, is sometimes surprised by the Spirit and led to ever greater heights of beauty and vision, until he makes the vision his own by Art. Then he is no longer what he was, but a chosen spirit inspired with prophecy or song to his fellows upon earth. It was this discovery, that earth is lifted by Vision which though it disappears makes us and our earth something new, that provided a scheme capable of ever greater treat-

¹ Mona Wilson, p. 262. ² In the last Illustration but one the cloud disappears too.

Introduction

Piping down the valleys wild,
Piping songs of pleasant glee
On a cloud I saw a child,
And he laughing said to me,

Pipe a song about a Lamb:
So I piped with merry chear,
Piper pipe that song again—
So I piped, he wept to hear.

Drop thy pipe thy happy pipe
Sing thy songs of happy chear.
So I sung the same again
While he wept with joy to hear.

Piper sit thee down and write
In a book that all may read—
So he vanish'd from my sight,
And I pluck'd a hollow reed,

And I made a rural pen,
And I stain'd the water clear,
And I wrote my happy songs,
Every child may joy to hear.

Introduction

Piping down the valleys wild
Piping songs of pleasant glee
On a cloud I saw a child.
And he laughing said to me.

Pipe a song about a Lamb
Sol piped with merry chear.
Piper pipe that song again
Sol piped, he wept to hear.

Drop thy pipe thy happy pipe
Sing thy songs of happy chear.
Sol sang the same again,
While he wept with joy to hear.

Piper sit thee down and write
In a book that all may read
So he vanished from my sight
And I pluck'd a hollow reed

And I made a rural pen,
And I stain'd the water clear,
And I wrote my happy songs
Every child may joy to hear.

ment, as Blake's life experience and thought gave him greater matter for his art.

In conclusion, let us return for a moment to the possibility of regarding the whole song as a symbol of life; the Piper as the soul descending into "the valleys," which are earth, discovering by the aid of Heaven the symbolic "Lamb" or Christ, and being inspired by the theme to a mission of joy. Mr Damon even suggests that the child on the cloud is Christ. He is, of course, right—at least in a sense; yet I should hesitate to express it quite like that, and for a reason.

Blake's imagination, like that of other poets, often presented him with a vivid picture that summarised and symbolised a many-sided experience, and remained in his mind as the record of that experience. This vision of a child on a cloud was probably such a picture, and stood for Blake as the image of that mood of inspiration which produced the "Songs of Innocence." Then, as he came more and more to identify his inspiration with Christianity, the image itself developed, and became, when he wrote "Jerusalem," a vision of Christ awaking him from sleep and dictating his song:

This theme calls me in sleep night after night, & evry morn
Awakes me at sun-rise, then I see the Saviour over me
Spreading his beams of love, & dictating the words of this mild song.

("Jerusalem," p. 4.)

It is tempting for the student of Blake's later work to say that the Child of Innocence was Christ all the time, and that in fact "He" became a little child. But there is an answer to this. In the frontispiece to the "Songs of Experience" the child on the cloud has become a winged child caught by the Piper and carried on his head. You cannot surely catch "Christ" in this way, and the child is obviously one of the fairies and elves whom "Experience"

teaches us to "catch and to Cage," or, in other words, to make our own, nay, even ourselves.

The important thing to remember in this stage of Blake's work is never to let his poetry escape us in our attempts to "catch and to cage" his meaning. If we say that this child is Christ—well and good; but we had better say nothing of the kind if it makes us forget for a moment that it is a laughing, song-loving child, a vision of sunlit freedom and idyllic poetry. Only if we remember all this shall we do well to remember at the same time that every child for Blake is "Christ."

The Shepherd.

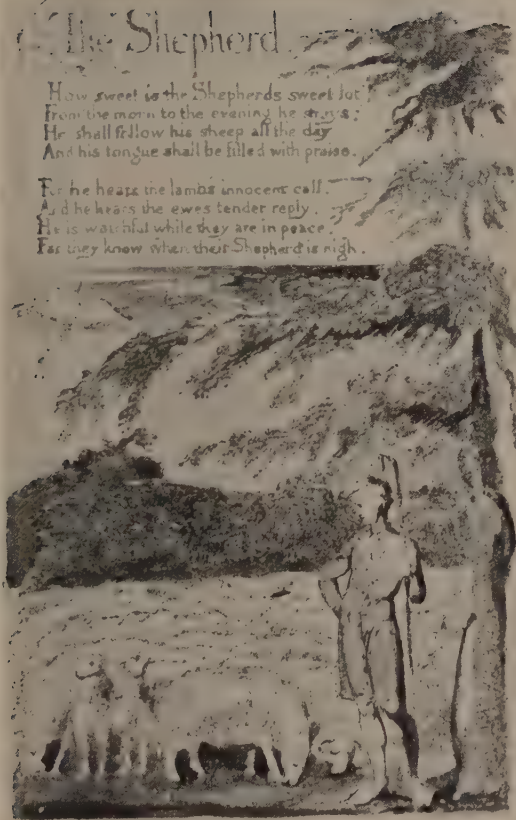
How sweet is the Shepherds sweet lot,
From the morn to the evening he strays:
He shall follow his sheep all the day
And his tongue shall be filled with praise.

For he hears the lambs innocent call,
And he hears the ewes tender reply.
He is watchful while they are in peace,
For they know when their Shepherd is nigh.

The Shepherd

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From the morn to the evening he strays;
He shall follow his sheep all the day
And his tongue shall be filled with praise.

For he heare the lambs innocent call,
And he hears the ewes tender reply,
He is watchful while they are in peace,
For they know when their Shepherd is nigh.



I

THE PIPER PIPES

Q. and most S. I. E. ¹	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{The Shepherd.} \\ \text{The Ecchoing Green.} \\ \text{Laughing Song.} \\ \text{Spring.} \end{array} \right\}$	C. K. (L., S. I. E.)
U., S. I. E.		

THE SHEPHERD

WHAT has just been said of the child on a cloud applies with equal force to "The Shepherd." First and foremost, we must think of this Shepherd as a being of childhood visions, visions never very far, perhaps, from the Good Shepherd of the Psalms or of the Gospels, but not directly representing either. Mr Ellis goes so far as to say that the Shepherd symbolises the One and his sheep the many. This is not so much untrue as grievously unpoetic. It is like saying that when Shakespeare speaks of—

" Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang "

he intends the tree to symbolise a church and the birds the choir-boys. Unless we abandon ourselves to Blake's poetry while we may, and bask in the sunshine of his pastoral imagery, we shall find when we come to his philosophy that we have clipped its poetic

¹ The letters Q., C., K., etc., refer to the various issues of the "Songs" as described by Keynes in his Bibliography, in which the above songs appear in juxtaposition.

The order in the earlier issues, which contained only the "Songs of Innocence," is very varied. Many of the issues of the two series have a uniform order. These latter issues are described as L., S. I. E.; U., S. I. E., etc.

wings and that it cannot lift us. Then let this Shepherd be neither the philosophic One nor the incarnate Word, but just a shepherd with his sheep. And when we meet the crook of innocence in the sterner regions of Blake's mind, draughts of sweet refreshment will flow over us in the memories of those long days in Arcady which these two little verses conjure for us, and the illustration makes immortal.

That twice-repeated "sweet" of the first line does not cloy the ear because the accent is far weaker on the second than the first. The repetition gives the song a bird-like character, or, like the throb of a bell, the second "sweet" gently echoes the first, holding it on till it pass for ever into the mind.

In the second line the metre has perfected its beat and reverberates with perfect regularity to the end.

— — — — —

The words sing themselves. We hardly need to be given a tune—a tune comes to us as we read, and in these two little verses we find whole long days, morning to evening, of comfort and beauty and peace.

The Ecchoing Green

The Sun does arise,
And make happy the skies.
The merry bells ring,
To welcome the Spring.
The sky-lark and thrush,
The birds of the bush,
Sing louder around,
To the bells chearful sound,
While our sports shall be seen
On the Ecchoing Green.

Old John with white hair
Does laugh away care,
Sitting under the oak,
Among the old folk.

They



The Echoing Green

The Sun does arise
And make happy the slopes.
The merry bells ring
To welcome the Spring.
The sky-lark and thrush,
The birds of the bush,
Sing louder around,
To the bee's cheerful sound.
While our sports shall be seen,
On the Echoing Green.

Old John with white hair
Does laugh away care,
Sitting under the oak,
Among the old folk.

They

They laugh at our play,
And soon they all say,
Such such were the joys,
When we all girls & boys,
In our youth time were seen,
On the Ecchoing Green.

Till the little ones weary
No more can be merry
The sun does descend,
And our sports have an end:
Round the laps of their mothers,
Many sisters and brothers,
Like birds in their nest,
Are ready for rest:
And sport no more seen,
On the darkening Green.

They laugh at our play,
And soon they all say,
Such ones were the joys,
When we all girls & boys,
In our youth time were seen,
On the Echoing Green.

Till the little ones weary
No more can be merry,
The sun does descend,
And our sports have an end;
Round the laps of their mothers,
Many sisters and brothers,
Like birds in their nest,
Are ready for rest:
And sport no more seen,
On the darkening Green.



THE ECCHOING GREEN

ANOTHER long, long day in the country opens for us in these three little verses. Not one day only, for it is a day that tells the whole story of human life. Old John and the children, and the laughter and the memories—memories of other childhoods and other sunrises, of other birds that are the same for us, and the same bells that are so different for us; and then the mother-love, and mother-comfort, and home for the happy feverish limbs, and the long silent dusk on the empty green.

The first “echo” of this song is in the “Poetical Sketches,” in the fourth of the group of “Songs,” and especially in the second and fourth verses.

I love the laughing vale

I love the echoing hill

.

I love the oaken seat

Beneath the oaken tree

Where all the old villagers meet

And laugh our sports to see.

LAUGHING SONG

FOR Wordsworth Nature has moods which dominate the lakes and rivers and the very hills: yet the hills were there, and Nature was often masterful and assertive. For Blake the moods are the whole. The sun on the echoing green rose to make the skies happy; and here the dimpling stream, the green woods, the air and the hills, the meadows and the grasshopper and the 'painted' birds, all join in to swell our own sweet chorus of laughter.

If anyone ever doubted that these lyrics were written to be sung as Blake himself sang them, this one surely silences all question. Who can solemnly read the refrain, "Ha, ha, he!" without being forced to abandon the notion of something purely literary?

We are boys and girls again. The pulse and gleam of youthful laughter trips out a measure that goes singing on after the verse ends. Let your great poets feast on their own great themes—cherries and nuts and laughter for Mary and Susan and Emily to-day, and for you and Blake and me. An early version attempts to be more stately, and we read:

When the greenwood laughs with the voice of joy
And the dimpling stream runs laughing by
When Edessa and Lyca and Emilie
With their sweet round mouths sing ha, ha, he,

But even the sweet round mouths of "Edessa and Lyca and Emilie," for whom Blake first spread his table in the shade, were not so sweet and round as Mary's and Susan's and Emily's, whom he chose to live and be merry with in these "Songs of Innocence."

This song, too, is anticipated in the same beautiful song from the "Poetical Sketches" as anticipates "The Ecchoing Green."

Laughing Song,

When the green woods laugh with the voice of joy
And the dimpling stream runs laughing by,
When the air does laugh with our merry wit,
And the green hill laughs with the noise of it.

When the meadows laugh with lively green
And the grasshopper laughs in the merry scene,
When Mary and Susan and Emily,
With their sweet round mouths sing Ha, Ha, He.

When the painted birds laugh in the shade
Where our table with cherries and nuts is spread
Come live & be merry and join with me,
To sing the sweet chorus of Ha, Ha, He.



Laughing Song.

When the green woods laugh with the voice of joy
And the dipping stream runs laughing by,
When the air does laugh with our merry wit,
And the green hill laughs with the noise of it.

When the meadows laugh with lively green
And the grasshopper laughs in the merry scene,

When May and Susan and Fanny
With their sweet round mouths sing Ha Ha He.

When the painted birds laugh in the shade
Where our table with cherries and nuts is spread
Come live & be merry and join with me.

To sing the sweet chorus of Ha Ha He.

Spring

Sound the Flute!
Now it's mute.
Birds delight
Day and Night.
Nightingale
In the dale
Lark in Sky
Merrily
Merrily Merrily to welcome in the Year

Little Boy
Full of joy.

Little



Spring

Sound the Flute!

Now it's mute.

Birds delight

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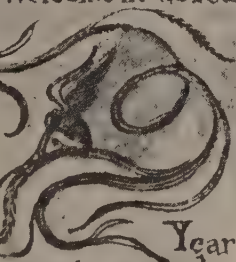
Little Girl
Sweet and small.
Cock does crow
So do you.
Merry voice
Infant noise
Merrily Merrily to welcome in the Year

Little Lamb
Here I am,
Come and lick
My white neck.
Let me pull
Your soft Wool.
Let me kiss
Your soft face.
Merrily Merrily we welcome in the Year

Little Girl
Sweet and small
Cock does crow
So do you
Merry voice
Infant noise
Merrily Merrily to welcome in the Year



Little Lamb
Here I am
Come and lick
My white neck
Let me pull
Your soft Wool
Let me kiss
Your soft face
Merrily Merrily we welcome in the Year



SPRING

RHYMES, rhymes like the jingling of sweet bells crowd on us in these lines. Rhymes, reckless and unpremeditated, often resting the ear by being only the shadows of rhymes, but still sufficient to maintain the swift reverberations of the lilting song. Yet how perfectly the music fits the theme, or rather—for surely the music came first—the theme has instilled itself into the music. First the wood-note of the flute, and then the silence . . . answered by the wild note of the birds; then the alternations of day and night and the wild note fitted first to one and then the other, until the beat now secured runs on of itself in the pure music of the word “merrily,” and a coda to bring us back to the keynote “Spring,” so magically expressed in the word “Year.”

Now we repeat, and the birds of night and day pass the song on to the children. The little boy and the little girl become sweet human echoes of the distant cock-crow, till the second verse ends like the first.

Then the merry din of waking day subsides and the soft sense of touch, so significant for Blake, carries on the song as the child and the lamb play and chatter on the stream’s cool bank, and the third verse ends like the others, but with a lovely change from “to” to “we.”

And so we reach the central theme of Blake’s “Innocence,” the “Child” and the “Lamb.”

The Lamb

Little Lamb who made thee
Dost thou know who made thee
Gave thee life & bid thee feed,
By the stream & o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing wooly bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice:
Little Lamb who made thee
Dost thou know who made thee

Little Lamb I'll tell thee,
Little Lamb I'll tell thee;
He is called by thy name,
For he calls himself a Lamb:
He is meek & he is mild,
He became a little child:
I a child & thou a lamb,
We are called by his name.
Little Lamb God bless thee,
Little Lamb God bless thee.

The Lamb

Little Lamb who made thee
 Dost thou know who made thee
 Gave thee life & bid thee feed;
 By the stream & o'er the mead;
 Gave thee clothing of delight,
 Softest clothing woolly bright;
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 He is meek & he is mild;
 He became a little child;
 A child & thou a lamb,
 We are called by his name.
 Little Lamb God bless thee.
 Little Lamb God bless thee.



II

SONGS OF TEARS AND JOY

	The Lamb	} C. K.	
Q. and most S. I. E.	{ A Dream		
	{ On Another's Sorrow	} A. and E., S.I.E., The	
P. separated by The Little	{ Nurse's Song		{ Nurse's Song coming first.
Boy lost and found	{ Night	} A. F. & G. T. w. Cradle	
P. Q. U., and nearly all	{ A Cradle Song		{ Song first.
the issues of S. I. E.	{ The Divine Image.		

THE LAMB

THERE is almost nothing cryptic about this lyrical gem. Deeper knowledge of Blake will reveal no darkly buried meaning, only a deeper sense in the meaning obvious to all. It is a real child and a real lamb. The child talks all the time, and no pretence is made of the lamb's answering. The first verse is all about the lamb and the world of poetry it represents to the child. The second verse is about the mystery of creation. The lamb itself is the question: the child's deep mind is the answer. This unburdens itself with a solemnity approaching hesitation:

“ Little Lamb I'll tell thee,”

but not all at once, it is too precious for that:

“ Little Lamb I'll tell thee,”

he repeats, as the answer rises from quiet deeps. Thou and I,

our life and being, are the Being of God, of whose own Self we are made.¹

“Little Lamb God bless thee”

and then the echo—is it perhaps from the Poet, blessing the child,
“himself a lamb”?—

“Little Lamb God bless thee.”

¹ I think the expressions “He is called by thy name” and “We are called by his name” mean more than that there is an analogy between us and Christ. The “name” of anything is associated with its individuality and being (*v. infra*, “Infant Joy”), and Blake had a religious sense of its importance. In his last years writing (July 16th, 1826) to his friend Linnell, who wished to name one of his sons “William” after Blake (instead of Thomas after Mrs Linnell’s father), he says: “It will be brutal, not to say worse, for it is worse in my opinion and on my Part. Pray reconsider it if not too late. It very much troubles Me as a Crime in which I shall be The Principal.”

A Dream

Once a dream did weave a shade,
O'er my Angel-guarded bed,
That an Emmet lost it's way,
Where on grass methought I lay.

Troubled wilderd and folorn
Dark benighted travel-worn,
Over many a tangled spray,
All heart-broke I heard her say,

O my children! do they cry,
Do they hear their father sigh,
Now they look abroad to see,
Now return and weep for me.

Pitying I drop'd a tear:
But I saw a glow-worm near:
Who replied, What wailing wight
Calls the watchman of the night.

I am set to light the ground,
While the beetle goes his round:
Follow now the beetles hum,
Little wanderer hie thee home.

A Dream

Once a dream did weave a shade
O'er my Angel-guarded bed,
That an Emmet lost its way
Where no grail methought I lay.
I wandered valdard and solorn,
A benighted travel-worn,
O'er many a tangled sprae,
All heart-broken I heard her say
O my children! do they cry?
Do they hear then father sigh?
Now they look abroad to see
Now return and woe for me.
Nighting I drop'd a tear:
But I saw a glow-worm near,
Who replied, What wailing woe?
Cels the watchman of the night,
I am set to light the ground,
While the beetle goes his round,
Follow now the beetles hum,
Little wanderer tis thee home.

A DREAM

WE turn now to a song sometimes associated with the Lamb by Blake, but so different that it seems almost a complete contrast, and it is difficult at first to find a connection. No doubt it lies in Man's vision of a Providence in the realms of lower nature. But "The Lamb," though it introduces a note of solemnity, is entirely happy: it is in the real world and flooded with the sunshine. The "Dream" introduces us into a world of woe and dim shades where we scarcely know whether we are moving among realities or pure ideas. It is so full of sorrow that in one copy Blake actually transferred it to "Experience."

It is, in fact, a dream about sorrow and comfort, not such as we know, but such as we can imagine in moods of fantasy. Perhaps even in the wildered wilds of earth's lower life among the grass, there is comfort and rescue for the lost and the forlorn. May we not dream of the glow-worm as the watchman, and the beetle as the wanderer's guide? It is a dream we shall wake from, but dreams may be lovely while they last.

It is possible that the "grass" here, as so often elsewhere, represents the earthly life of man, and in the illustration the "watchman of the night" is similarly placed to the figure of Christ in "The Divine Image." The poem may itself be an image of something deeper, and in its deeper sense more closely akin to "The Lamb." The seeking mother and the unavailing father remind us of the parents in "The Little Boy lost." The poem might be called "The Mother lost and found." It should be noted that help comes when the dreamer drops "a tear." The suggestion probably is that as we feel pity for the troubles of the lower world, so surely there is a divine compassion for our sorrows. In this case the poem is closely parallel to the next one.

ON ANOTHER'S SORROW

THE child and the lamb represent a moment in Creation when it seems to be without a problem. But the theme of this poem is one that introduces us to problems for ever unanswerable, and Blake frequently closed his "Songs of Innocence" with it.

It is closely connected (as all the later issues testify) with the foregoing. There the dreamer's tear is associated with the appearance of the rescuing light. And so the Eternal Mercy, watching over this lower world, cannot surely fail to enter into our sorrows as we enter into those of the weaker than ourselves.

This is no forensic question for Blake. His mind perhaps has nothing to offer in reply to the query, "Can it be?" It is his feelings that break through the verse in a wild sincerity, lovelier than any formal art:

No no never can it be.
Never never can it be.

The answer wells up from within ; it has little, perhaps no justification in the harsh outer world. There is no finality, therefore, in this poem, but rather beginnings of things that remain with Blake to the end of his days.

From this hour forth it seems as though he sets out upon a quest never perfectly resolved. Answer follows answer in his life and in his writings, only to prove itself no final answer at all. In his most golden moments he sometimes leaves his questions as questions, the more satisfying for being unanswered. "The Tyger" contains no answers. It is one series of superb queries, hot and burning or solemn and profound. And in the greatest of all his lyrical flights he makes his questions build a palace that answers could only shatter:

On Anothers Sorrow

Can I see anothers woe,
And not be in sorrow too.
Can I see anothers grief,
And not seek for kind relief.

And not sit beside the nest
Pouring pity in their breast.
And not sit the cradle near
Weeping tear on infants tear.

Can I see a falling tear,
And not feel my sorrows share,
Can a father see his child,
Weep, nor be with sorrow fill'd.

And not sit both night & day,
Wiping all our tears away.
O! no never can it be.
Never never can it be.

Can a mother sit and hear,
An infant groan an infant fear—
No no never can it be.
Never never can it be.

He doth give his joy to all.
He becomes an infant small.
He becomes a man of woe
He doth feel the sorrow too.

And can he who smiles on all
Hear the wren with sorrows small,
Hear the small birds grief & care
Hear the woes that infants bear—

Think not, thou canst sigh a sigh,
And thy maker is not by.
Think not, thou canst weep a tear,
And thy maker is not near.

O! he gives to us his joy,
That our grief he may destroy
Till our grief is fled & gone
He doth sit by us and moan

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And not be in sorrow too.

Can I see anothers grief.

And not seek for kind relief.

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Pouring pity in their breast

And not sit the cradle near

Weeping tears an infants tear.

And not sit both night & day.

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And thy maker is not near.

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That our grief he may destroy

Till our grief is fled & gone

He doth sit by us and moan

And did those feet in ancient time
Walk upon England's mountains green
And was the holy Lamb of God
On England's pleasant pastures seen?

And did the Countenance Divine
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here
Among these dark Satanic Mills?

The reply is not an answer, but a demand and a resolve:

Bring me my Bow of burning gold ;
Bring me my Arrows of desire :
Bring me my Spear : O clouds unfold !
Bring me my Chariot of fire !

I will not cease from Mental Fight,
Nor shall the Sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem,
In Englands green & pleasant Land.

(“Milton,” p. 2.)

Systems have their day, and statesmen come and go, but the prophets abide, and in the questions Blake asked and the visions he conjured, he has built something in the mind which can never be destroyed. We cannot finally *accept* tragedy and sorrow while such voices are heard, and it almost seems that they must in the long last conquer human indifference.

The word “Another” in this sense of another human spirit was a favourite one of Blake's, and came to stand for the whole thought of altruism in life. It was this fact of altruism in the human soul that made it something more than earth and at the same time seemed a pledge that the nature of things was fundamentally sympathetic.

NURSE'S SONG

PURE innocence, thoughtless and tender, must fade, and the "Nurse's Song" leads us to a change. Shadows are gathering upon the hills, but there is time for one more game. Let us leap and shout and laugh while the light is still in the skies. Did ever hills so echo?

If Blake's pictures are often poems, how often his poems are pure pictures. No hills outside a picture-book were ever "all covered" with sheep. But what a vision of evening and innocence and of never-to-be-forgotten happiness!

This is the second of the three songs we find in the "Island in the Moon," but the word "voices" is immensely more beautiful than the word "tongues," which the MS. version has. The poem there appears as a kind of answer or supplement to "Holy Thursday," and contrasts the life of the country child even under supervision with that of the little orphan in the city. It is followed by "The Little Boy lost," and was therefore in some sense a transition song from pure innocence to tragedy.

In the illustration a willow, weeping over the waters, seems to be a wonderfully expressive symbol of loving anxious care bending over Innocence.

Nurse's Song

When the voices of children are heard on the green
And laughing is heard on the hill,
My heart is at rest within my breast
And everything else is still

Then come home my children, the sun is gone down
And the dews of night arise
Come come leave off play, and let us away
Till the morning appears in the skies

No no let us play, for it is yet day
And we cannot go to sleep
Besides in the sky, the little birds fly
And the hills are all covered with sheep

Well well go & play till the light fades away
And then go home to bed
The little ones leaped & shouted & laugh'd
And all the hills echoed

Nurses Song

When the voices of children are heard on the green
And laughing is heard on the hill
My heart is at rest within my breast
And every thing else is still

Then come home my children the sun is gone down
And the dews of night arise
Come come leave off play, and let us away
Till the morning appears in the skies

No no let us play, for it is yet day
And we cannot go to sleep
Besides in the sky the little birds fly
And the hills are all covered with sheep

Well well go & play till the light fades away
And then go home to bed
The little ones leaped & shouted & laughed
And all the hills echoed



Night

The sun descending in the west,
The evening star does shine,
The birds are silent in their nest,
And I must seek for mine,
The moon like a flower,
In heavens high bower;
With silent delight,
Sits and smiles on the night.

Farewell green fields and happy groves,
Where flocks have took delight;
Where lambs have nibbled, silent moves
The feet of angels bright;
Unseen they pour blessing,
And joy without ceasing,
On each bud and blossom,
And each sleeping bosom.

They look in every thoughtless nest,
Where birds are coverd warm;
They visit caves of every beast,
To keep them all from harm:
If they see any weeping,
That should have been sleeping
They pour sleep on their head
And sit down by their bed.

Night

The sun descending in the west
The evening star does shine.
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Each birds are coverd warm;
They visit caves of every beast
To keep them all from harm.
If they see any weeping
That should have been sleeping
They pour sleep on their head
And sit down by their bed.

When wolves and tygers howl for prey
They pitying stand and weep;
Seeking to drive their thirst away,
And keep them from the sheep,
But if they rush dreadful;
The angels most heedful,
Recieve each mild spirit,
New worlds to inherit.

And there the lions ruddy eyes,
Shall flow with tears of gold:
And pitying the tender cries,
And walking round the fold:
Saying: wrath by his meekness
And by his health, sickness,
Is driven away,
From our immortal day.

And now beside thee bleating lamb,
I can lie down and sleep;
Or think on him who bore thy name,
Grase after thee and weep.
For wash'd in lifes river,
My bright mane for ever,
Shall shine like the gold,
As I guard o'er the fold.

When wolves and tigers howl for prey
They pitying stand and weep;
Seeking to drive their thirst away
And keep them from the sheep.
But if they rush dreadful;
The angels most heedful
Receive each milke spide
New worlds to inherit.

And there the lions suddie eyes,
Shall flow with tears of gold:
And praying the tender cries.
And walling round the fold:
Saying: wraith by his meekness
And by his health, sicknels.
Is driven away.
From our immortal day.

And now beside thee bleating lamb
I can lie down and sleep.
For think on him who bore thy name
To ease after thee and weep.
So washed in lifes river.
Thou bright mane for ever.
Shall shine like the gold.
And guard o'er the fold.



NIGHT

WE are still in Innocence, but now in a more wistful mood. The spring sunshine has gone, and the night is upon us. But what a night! How silently the moon shines "in heaven's high bower"; how still the shadows where the angels move. Each verse passes from action to contemplation, from outward care or dread to inward benison and redemption, and with the change, the repeated change of rhyme and metre.

And now for the first time¹ Blake introduces the wild animals that haunt the regions of our pristine fears, and seem to symbolise here life's underlying threat, that cannot be excluded from any world of thought.

The solution here appears childlike and innocent enough. Yet even in Blake's simplicity there is liable to be something profound. The poem does not merely mean that lions and wolves will be quite good in heaven. The thought at all events is very near, that behind this dim night in which we mostly live is even now a realm where our conflicting desires no longer conflict. For we are all broken lights of the Essence which we find in Christ, and, could we but see it, the lion's and the lamb's desires for food and life are equally divine. A kindred theme was to find great grandeur of expression in "The Tyger" of Experience.²

I am almost certain that this poem has a still deeper meaning, though it has only been towards the close of my study of the work

¹ First, that is to say, in S. I. E. In the "Poetical Sketches," "To the Evening Star" contains an almost identical theme.

² The gradual transference from naturalism to symbolism in this poem and in "The Little Girl Lost" is treated in the Introduction § 4 on The Symbolism. *Vide supra*, p. 69.

as a whole that I have found this conclusion irresistible. This remoter meaning will be more easily explained when we have considered "Infant Joy" and "The Blossom," but meanwhile I would ask the reader to take note of certain features in the illustrations. In the first we see the wild beast couched in his lair at the foot of the tree, and at its crest certain little figures that have a slight resemblance of attitude to the group at the head of "The Blossom."¹ In the second illustration one of the five angels is setting off on her solitary journey despite the persuasion of her companions to remain. This represents, I think, one of the eternals descending to earth, a figure connected with the story of "generation" or birth. (Cf. "Jerusalem," 55.)

¹ Both of these are winged (not always easy to see). One is seated in a position like that of the "mother" in "The Blossom." The other descends to her.

A CRADLE SONG

Sweet dreams form a shade,
O'er my lovely infants head.
Sweet dreams of pleasant streams,
By happy silent moony beams

Sweet sleep with soft down,
Weave thy brows an infant crown.
Sweet sleep Angel mild,
Hover o'er my happy child.

Sweet smiles in the night,
Hover over my delight.
Sweet smiles Mothers smiles
All the livelong night beguiles.

Sweet moans, dovelike sighs,
Chase not slumber from thy eyes,
Sweet moans, sweeter smiles,
All the dovelike moans beguiles.

Sleep sleep happy child.
All creation slept and smil'd.
Sleep sleep, happy sleep,
While o'er thee thy mother weep

Sweet babe in thy face,
Holy image I can trace.
Sweet babe once like thee,
Thy maker lay and wept for me

Wept

A CRADLE SONG

Sweet dreams be a shade
O'er my lovely infant's head
Sweet dreams as pleasant streams
By happy silent moony beams

Sweet sleep with soft down
Weave thy brows an infant crown
Sweet Sleep Angel mild
Hover o'er my darling child

Sweet dreams be a shade
Hover over my delight
Sweet dreams be a shade
And a lovely night, be a shade
Sweet dreams, drowsy sighs
Gaze not slumber from thy eyes
Sweet dreams, sweeter smiles
At the drowsy means beguiled

Sleep sleep happy child
All creation slept and smil'd
Sleep sleep, happy sleep
While o'er thee thy mother weep
Sweet babe in thy face
Holy image I can trace
Sweet babe, once thou art
Thy mother's joy and comfort

Wept for me for thee for all,
When he was an infant small.
Thou his image ever see,
Heavenly face that smiles on thee.

Smiles on thee on me on all,
Who became an infant small,
Infant smiles are his own smiles,
Heaven & earth to peace beguiles.

Went for me for thee for all.
When he was an infant small.
Thou his image ever see.
Heavenly face that smiles on thee.
Smiles on thee on me on all.
Who became an infant small.
His smiles are his own smiles.
Heaven & earth to peace be smiles.



A CRADLE SONG

AND indeed our sleep is watched. In this, one of the simplest of Blake's songs, the mother croons over the babe in a sweetness that flows on endlessly and makes the "livelong night" a court of paradise, until visions of the Eternal Babe, whose smiles and tears are the fount of peace and purity in earth and heaven, fill the sacred chamber where my child—my child and your child—the Eternal Child—lies sleeping.

Blake makes a very effective contrast between the decorative design on the first page of this song and the illustration on the second. The first seems to represent the sleep of the child, and the second the watching of the mother.

THE DIVINE IMAGE

IN this great poem (in the later issues almost invariably printed next to the foregoing) the "child" and the "lamb" are both forgotten. The fleeting beauties and dreamings of boyhood are passing, and Blake puts out his hand firmly to grasp an idea that never again leaves him. In Man alone is our vision of God. Even the Tyger is to appear only as a symbol, a creature or creation. Man, in his love and beauty, is the Divine Essence itself. This thought is the power that watches over us, for it speaks of the deepest within us and "What is Above is Within" (Jerusalem 71⁶).¹ Wherever man wakes to it, life becomes beatific, at once blessed and beneficent.

The verse is firm, direct, and simple, weak in rhyme and unsettled in metre, but strong in beat and in the precise value of every word. The magic with which the virtues are allied to the features of man culminates in making the human dress a human feature and representative of "peace." The splendour of vision is almost too intense without this gentle veil.

The illustration is one of the most beautiful and significant. The vegetable, flame-like growth clearly symbolises human life, green and merely vegetable at its source where man and woman rise from the earth to be uplifted by the vision of Christ, the Divine Essence. Now as on a tongue of flame they are lifted above the shadows of earth which shroud the last two verses of the poem, up to serene heights of light and beatitude, where they worship amid angels the common Light and Life of all humanity.

¹ Cf. "Thou art a Man God is no more
Thy own humanity learn to adore
For that is my Spirit of Life."—"The Everlasting Gospel."

The Divine Image.

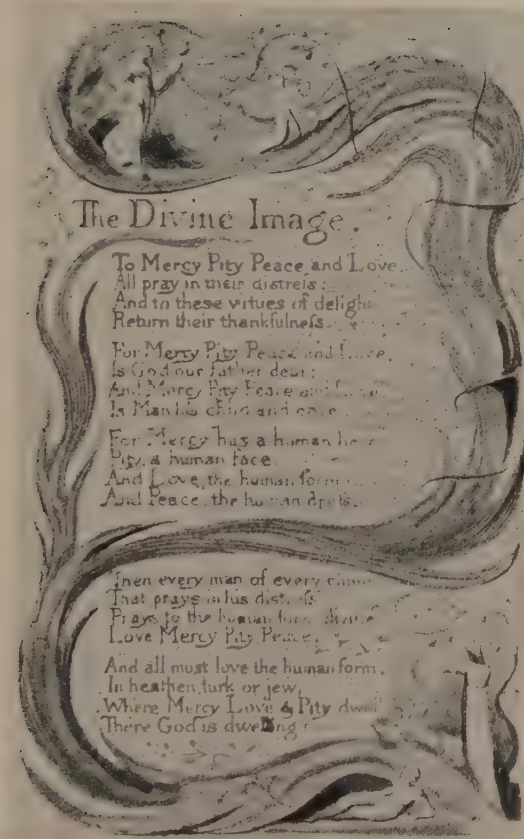
To Mercy Pity Peace and Love,
All pray in their distress:
And to these virtues of delight
Return their thankfulness.

For Mercy Pity Peace and Love,
Is God our father dear:
And Mercy Pity Peace and Love,
Is Man his child and care.

For Mercy has a human heart
Pity, a human face:
And Love, the human form divine,
And Peace, the human dress.

Then every man of every clime,
That prays in his distress,
Prays to the human form divine
Love Mercy Pity Peace.

And all must love the human form,
In heathen, turk or jew.
Where Mercy, Love & Pity dwell,
There God is dwelling too.



The Divine Image.

To Mercy Pity Peace and Love
All pray in their distrels:
And to these virtues of delight
Return their thankfulness.

For Mercy Pity Peace and Love
Is God our Father dear:
And Mercy Pity Peace and Love
Is Man his chin and ear.

For Mercy has a human heart
Pity, a human face,
And Love, the human form divine,
And Peace, the human dress.

Then every man of every clime
That prays in his distels,
Prays to the human form divine,
Love Mercy Pity Peace.

And all must love the human form,
In heathen, Turk or Jew,
Where Mercy Love & Pity dwell,
There God is dwelling.

III

SONGS OF DAWNING THOUGHT

	Holy Thursday	}	A
In nearly all issues.	{ The Little Boy lost		
	{ The Little Boy found	}	F
With The Blossom inter-	{ The Chimney Sweeper		
vening in nearly all S.I.E.	{ The Little Black Boy.		

IN all these songs there is a deep note of social responsibility. Children should not be lost or neglected. In most of the poems there is a sense of the saving power of ideas. The order in which I put them is partly historical. "Holy Thursday" is the first song we find in MS. form (unless the "Laughing Song," written on the fly-leaf of a copy of the "Poetical Sketches," precedes the "Island in the Moon"). It is followed in the MS. first by the "Nurse's Song" and then by "The Little Boy lost." This last was completed in the engraved text by adding "The Little Boy found," and immediately preceded in most of the later copies by "The Chimney Sweeper." This in its turn is generally preceded by "The Blossom," and both by "The Little Black Boy." The prevailing order in the various issues is therefore as follows :—

The Little Black Boy,
The Blossom,
The Chimney Sweeper,
The Little Boy lost,
The Little Boy found,

"Holy Thursday" being unconnected with the group. In the Rowfant copy, "Holy Thursday" is preceded by the "Nurse's

Song," and followed by "The Little Boy lost." Blake's order has a special interest and significance, which will be explained later ; but the order in which I place them here makes their exposition somewhat easier.

Though full of solemnity, there is scarcely any deeper meaning in "Holy Thursday"; in "The Little Boy lost" the deeper meaning is very clear once it is pointed out; in "The Chimney Sweeper," although the deeper meaning is obscure, the poem is not really intelligible without it ; in "The Little Black Boy" the poem is beautiful without explanation, but in order to understand its connection with Blake's thought and experience a good deal of examination and comparison is necessary. Even those who do not admit the fact that explanation increases its beauty, must, I think, agree that it increases its profundity.

"The Blossom" is postponed to the next section both on account of its subject and its deeply esoteric character.

HOLY THURSDAY

Twas on a Holy Thursday their innocent faces clean
The children walking two & two in red & blue & green
Grey headed beadles walkd before with wands as white as
snow
Till into the high dome of Pauls they like Thames waters
flow

O what a multitude they seemd these flowers of London
town
Seated in companies they sit with radiance all their own
The hum of multitudes was there but multitudes of lambs
Thousands of little boys & girls raising their innocent
hands

Now like a mighty wind they raise to heaven the voice of
song
Or like harmonious thunderings the seats of heaven among
Beneath them sit the aged men wise guardians of the poor
Then cherish pity; lest you drive an angel from your door



HOLY THURSDAY

It was on a Holy Thursday their innocent faces clean
The children walking barefoot in red & blue & green
Grey headed beards walked before with wands as white as
Till into the high dome of St. Dunstons the flames & stars flew

O what a multitude they seemed those flowers of London town
Seated in companies they sat with reverence all their own
The hum of multitudes was there but multitudes of launhs
Thousands of boys & girls raising their innocent

No voice: amongst them they began to sing in the voice of song
Or like harmonious voices the seats of heaven among
Beneath them sat the aged men wise guardians of the poor
Then kneeling down they sang a hymn to him that was their Lord



HOLY THURSDAY

THIS poem stands in several respects by itself. It probably represents Blake's first impulse to write the "Songs of Innocence"; and yet it is in some ways the maturest of them all. In no other song of "Innocence" except "The Chimney Sweeper" does Blake take his theme from the great city where he was born, brought up, and married. Nor does he in any other song of "Innocence" seem interested in humanity in the mass, or recognise the responsibility for relieving distress and alleviating the lot of mankind—matters which become of such urgent interest to him in "Experience." Its diction is also quite different from the others, and less childlike.

In another sense the poem is simple. It appears to be a picture of something the poet has actually seen and not a picture imagined in vision. I do not conceive it to have a hidden meaning, and only the simplest of morals. It is a picture of wonderful beauty, told in wonderful music, and engraved and coloured as surely one of the most beautiful pages of print ever created. And yet if it has no impressive moral it develops along a most interesting course.

There is only one word that seems to need explanation—"beneath," in the last line but one. Beneath what, or whom, were the aged men sitting? For there is no seated gallery at St Paul's. The simplest answer is that the old men were sitting down while the children stood up to sing; but I do not think that is the whole answer. Blake in "The Piper" and elsewhere starts upon earth and returns to it after a heavenly vision. Here the vision is inspired by the children whose song lifts him soaring in spirit up to the courts of heaven ("mid cherubim and seraphim," as the MS. has it), and to him it seems as he returns to earth as though the aged

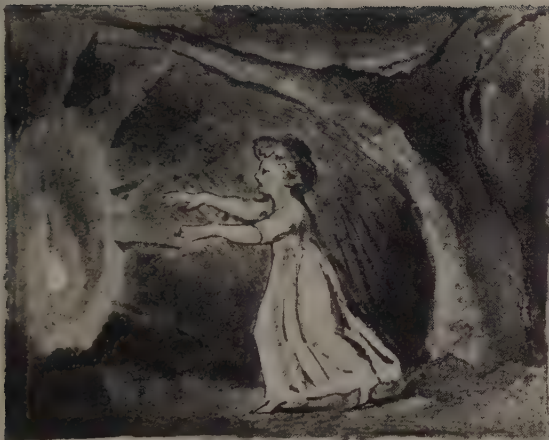
guardians have been all the time sitting on the earth beneath while the children chanted in heaven. And this explains more fully the meaning of the last line of all. His vision has told him that the children whom our gifts of pity go to help are seen by the visionary as angels round the throne of God.

Gentle as this gentle lyric appears, with its benevolent little appeal, it was to prove itself a slumbering tiger. In the "Songs of Experience" it is to arise in verse that scorns all prettiness and flames like liquid steel in scorn and prophetic passion never to die so long as man has a heart within.

The Little Boy lost

Father, father, where are you going
O do not walk so fast.
Speak father, speak to your little boy
Or else I shall be lost,

The night was dark no father was there
The child was wet with dew.
The mire was deep, & the child did weep
And away the vapour flew.



The Little Boy lost

Father, father where are you going
 O do not walk so fast.
 Speak father speak to your little boy
 Or else I shall be lost.

The night was dark no father was there
 The child was wet with dew.
 The mire was deep, & the child did weep
 And away the vapour flew.

THE LITTLE BOY lost

THE LITTLE BOY found

THE small initial letters to the words "lost" and "found" are an indication that Blake intended the two songs to form one poem. The first but not the second occurs in the MS. of the "Island in the Moon" after "Holy Thursday" and the "Nurse's Song." These perhaps represent children under guardianship, in the town and in the country respectively; and this is the child under false guardianship.

But here the poem has been completed to make a contrast between the father who is "not there" and the Father who is always there—and it is impossible not to read into the poem something of Blake's deeper philosophy.

Even when he wrote the first poem I cannot help thinking that the strange expression, "No father was there," had a more than natural significance, and the original form of the previous words, "The night it was dark," seems purposely to avoid the purely narrative form finally adopted, "The night was dark." Moreover, one has to remember the fact already referred to (Preface, p. 39), that the adventures of little boys in these songs are religious, or philosophical, as those of little girls are romantic.

At all events in its form here, the double poem seems clearly religious in intention, and contrasts the false light with the true.

There is a kind of external God we are taught to seek as children, to whom we cry in vain: he is ever evading us, and our cries win no response, until in our hour of deepest need we realise that we are forsaken in a dark watery world of materialism and despair. Grief overwhelms us as we realise our loneliness, and the illusion of a higher

external help vanishes from our minds. But this very surrender to grief and the realisation that we have no hope but in ourselves, is the discovery of the Divine that never fails.

The idea that God is within is one of incomparable radiance, to guide us safely over the earth. But to those who love us, we seem lost when we lose our childish faith, and we are only found by them when we have found ourselves. Thus the mother recovers her child in his discovery of his own Soul.

But I think there is a still subtler meaning in the poem, so characteristic of Blake that I must attempt to explain it.

The father in the first poem and the mother in the second seem to me alike to represent something more than earthly parents. All men are in the image of God,¹ but when we try to *teach* God to another we are attempting to make *our* vision *his*, and this can only mislead, for we are all different lights of the one true Being. In other words, God must be experienced to be known; there is no other way, and no man's experience can be the substitute for our own.

It was for a similar reason, I imagine, that Blake regarded education as *the* fundamental error. It was the attempt to substitute instruction for experience. "There is no use in education"—he shocked Crabb Robinson by declaring—"I hold it wrong. It is the great sin."²

The mother too probably represents all the homeliness of Earth which a mother stands for to her infant child. As Wordsworth expresses it in the *Prelude* (Book II.) :

¹ "All Religions are One."

² In the Vision of the Last Judgment (MS. essay) however he makes a great concession, admitting that a man *may* "Reject Error by the Advice of a Friend." Apparently we may be negatively served by the experience of others and learn what *not* to believe. In the Ninth Job illustration, again, the shock of Eliphaz's vision appears to be a stage in Job's redemption.

The Little Boy found

The little boy lost in the lonely fen,
Led by the wand'ring light,
Began to cry, but God ever nigh,
Appeard like his father in white.

He kissed the child & by the hand led
And to his mother brought,
Who in sorrow pale, thro' the lonely dale
Her little boy weeping sought.



The Little Boy Found

The little boy lost in the lonely fen,
 Led by the waning light,
 Began to cry, but God ever nigh,
 Appeared like his father in white.
 He kissed the child & by the hand led
 And to his mother brought,
 Who in sorrow pale thro' the lonely dale
 Her little boy weeping sought.

“blest the Babe
Nursed in his Mother’s arms . . .
Along his infant veins are interfused
The gravitation and the filial bond
Of nature that connect him with the world.”

Now Blake feels that in losing God we lose Earth too, and our “Mother” is left mourning ; a theme again characteristically expressed by Wordsworth in his picture of the over-educated child (*Prelude*, Book V.) :

“Meanwhile old grandame earth is grieved to find
The playthings which her love designed for him
Unthought of: in their woodland beds the flowers
Weep, and the river sides are all forlorn.”

Blake’s idea was in many respects very different from Wordsworth’s, as his art was ; but I feel sure that the boy’s restoration to his mother symbolises the Return to Earth which the illumination of Vision brings about.

THE CHIMNEY SWEEPER

THIS poem begins with a line of extreme simplicity. It is only the second line's reinforcement of the beat and its rhyme that fashions it into verse. The third line again takes up one of the feet (iamb), and the fourth line the other (anapæsts), so as still further to emphasise the metrical qualities of the first prose sentence. It is as though Blake had picked up a common stone from the road, and worked it into a jewel.

When my mother died I was very young

is prose until Blake has completed the verse, and then it is song. In his 1905 edition of Blake's poems, Dr Sampson put an apostrophe before the four times repeated "weep" to suggest that the little boy's cry meant "sweep." Most editors have followed him since; but though there is very little doubt that this was Blake's meaning it is equally certain that he meant the word to represent sorrow and be connected with the child's earliest cries. In "Experience" he says:

A little black thing among the snow:
Crying weep, weep, in notes of woe!

where the chimney-sweeper is clearly following his trade; and we may suppose this cry "sweep sweep" (uttered like one word with the accent on the second syllable and the "s" hardly heard) was a common sound in the morning streets of Blake's youth, such as his readers would recognise without the apostrophe or the accent.

The poem is closely connected and contrasted with "The Little Black Boy." In both we begin with the mother, and are led by vision to the Divine father. In both an earthly darkness of the

The Chimney Sweeper

When my mother died I was very young,
And my father sold me while yet my tongue,
Could scarcely cry weep weep weep weep.
So your chimneys I sweep & in soot I sleep.

Theres little Tom Dacre, who cried when his head
That curl'd like a lambs back, was shav'd, so I said,
Hush Tom never mind it, for when your head's bare,
You know that the soot cannot spoil your white hair.

And so he was quiet, & that very night,
As Tom was a sleeping he had such a sight,
That thousands of sweepers Dick, Joe, Ned & Jack
Were all of them lock'd up in coffins of black,

And by came an Angel who had a bright key,
And he open'd the coffins & set them all free.
Then down a green plain leaping laughing they run
And wash in a river and shine in the Sun.

Then naked & white, all their bags left behind,
They rise upon clouds, and sport in the wind.
And the Angel told Tom, if he'd be a good boy,
He'd have God for his father & never want joy.

And so Tom awoke and we rose in the dark
And got with our bags & our brushes to work.
Tho' the morning was cold, Tom was happy & warm.
So if all do their duty, they need not fear harm.

The Chimney Sweeper

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And my father sold me while yet my tongue
Could scarcely cry weep weep weep weep
So your chimneys I sweep & in soot I sleep.
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That curld like a lambs back, was shav'd, sol said.
Hush Tom never mind it, for when your heads bare
You know that the soot cannot spoil your white hair
And so he was quiet, & that very night,
As Tom was a sleeping he had such a sight,
That thousands of sweepers Dick Joe Ned & Jack
Were all of them lock'd up in coffins of black
And by came an Angel who had a bright key
And he open'd the coffins & set them all free
Then down a green plain leaping laughing they run
And wash in a river and shine in the Sun.
Then naked & white, all their bags left behind.
They rise upon clouds, and sport in the wind.
And the Angel told Tom, if hed be a good boy,
Hed have God for his father & never want joy
And so Tom awake, and we rose in the dark
And got with our bags & our brushes to work.
Tho' the morning was cold, Tom was happy & warm.
So if all do their duty, they need not fear harm.



flesh is finally escaped spiritually. In both the "white" or "silver" hair seems to have a specially spiritual significance. In both one little boy helps and protects another by his love and thought. But whereas one dwells in the southern wild and is dark by nature, the other lives in the crowded city, and his blackened skin represents the cruelty of man.

A very little reflection shows that there is something systematic in the story. It is not for nothing that the child's vision follows immediately after his being given the idea that his "white hair" is potentially *there* just as much when it is shaved off as before; and by being removed into a region of ideas it can no longer be sullied by earthly soot.

This Platonic thought is more than a momentary comfort; it becomes a vision; and "that very night" Tom has a dream of an angel with a key. On the surface, the dream represents something that happens, or is to happen after death. Dick, Joe, Ned, and Jack are in their coffins. But the discerning eye will see in those coffins the circumstances of their living bodies, not their dead ones. The angel's key is the Platonic thought that things in the mind are the most real. This makes every spirit free. White and naked, the soot bags of earth left below, they float on the clouds of vision. Then the same angel tells Tom not that when he dies he will go to heaven, but that by being good he can have God for his father all the time, and "never" want joy, for we can dwell with God always, once we realise his inward presence. It is very significant that God's fatherhood is conditional. For the child or man who has not the key of imagination or vision "no father is there." For those who have he is there always.

So far dream or vision, but now as always we return to earth, where the test of vision lies. Happiness is not something to be realised only in "an allegorical abode where existence hath never

come,"¹ but, if at all, here and now. The angelic key, discovered in dreams, turns the wards of the lock of Tom's earthly and living coffin:

And so Tom awoke and we rose in the dark
And got with our bags & our brushes to work.
Tho' the morning was cold, Tom was happy & warm.

then suddenly the most trite and commonplace little moral:

So if all do their duty, they need not fear harm.

Is it possible that Blake has taken all this trouble to show us that we ought to get up in the morning? The "duty" is not, surely, the sweeping of chimneys but the dreaming of dreams: And yet not quite that either, but rather so to comfort one another with visionary thought that our dreams shall undo the hardship of rising in the dark and cold.

Note.—One cannot help speculating as to where Blake got the name "Dacre" from, which Chas. Lamb changed to "Noddy": "There's little Tom Noddy." One asks was it a real name? Did Blake know some Tom Dacre? To me it seems much more probable that it is an early example of what he did so much later, when he invented names for his myth. He often reverses syllables or transposes letters to disguise his ideas, and in this case I suggest he turned Tom DARK (a little black boy) first into DAKR and then DACRE.

¹ "Europe," p. 5.

The Little Black Boy.

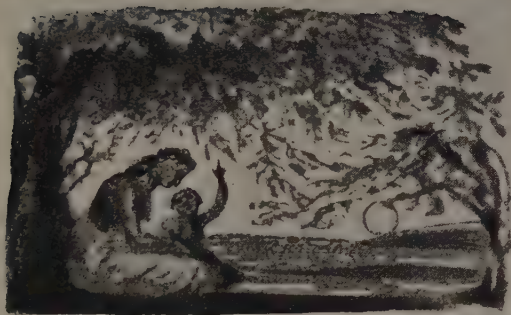
My mother bore me in the southern wild,
And I am black, but O! my soul is white,
White as an angel is the English child:
But I am black as if bereav'd of light.

My mother taught me underneath a tree
And sitting down before the heat of day,
She took me on her lap and kissed me,
And pointing to the east began to say.

Look on the rising sun: there God does live
And gives his light, and gives his heat away.
And flowers and trees and beasts and men recieve
Comfort in morning, joy in the noon day.

And we are put on earth a little space,
That we may learn to bear the beams of love.
And these black bodies and this sun-burnt face
Is but a cloud, and like a shady grove.

For



The Little Black Boy

My mother bore me in the southern wild,
And I am black, but O! my soul is white
White as an angel in the English child:
But I am black as if bereav'd of light.

My mother taught me underneath a tree
And sitting down before the heat of day
She took me on her lap and kiss'd me,
And pointing to the east began to say.

Look on the rising sun, there God does live
And gives his light and gives his heat away,
And flow'ers and trees and beasts and men receive
Comfort in morning joy in the noon day.

And we are put on earth a little space,
That we may learn to bear the beams of love,
And these black bodies and this sun-burnt face
Is but a cloud and like a shady grove.

For

For when our souls have learn'd the heat to bear
The cloud will vanish we shall hear his voice,
Saying: come out from the grove my love & care,
And round my golden tent like lambs rejoice.

Thus did my mother say and kissed me,
And thus I say to little English boy.
When I from black and he from white cloud free,
And round the tent of God like lambs we joy:

Ill shade him from the heat till he can bear,
To lean in joy upon our fathers knee.
And then I'll stand and stroke his silver hair,
And be like him and he will then love me.

For when our souls have learn'd the heat to bear
The cloud will vanish we shall hear his voice.
Saying: come out from the grove my love & care
And round my golden tent like lambs rejoice.

Thus did my mother say and hulsed me.
And thus I say to little English boy.
When I from black and he from white cloud free
And round the tent of God like lambs we joy:

I'll shade him from the heat till he can bear,
To lean in joy upon our fathers knee,
And then I'll stand and stroke his silver hair,
And be like him and he will then love me.



THE LITTLE BLACK BOY

THIS is one of the most beautiful and most characteristic of Blake's lyrics, and while the meaning is not quite on the surface, neither is it very deeply buried.

Blake is still far from the great myth developed in his prophetic books, where giants and genii thunder forth his mind, but he begins in these deeper songs to put his problems into the mouths of children. From the little black boy and the chimney sweeper those who have ears to hear may gather wisdom. As before, the poem begins with the Mother and ends with the Father, the earthly mother and the heavenly Father. It is an earlier and certainly much more poetic form of the doctrinal poem "To Tirzah" in "Experience," and here reflects Blake's phrase in "Jerusalem" (p. 7), "O holy Generation" (in this case mother-love-and-care), "Image of regeneration." Again it represents the return to earth of the "Piper," for the Father in the last illustration is symbolically represented as being on earth. So that, simple and beautiful as is its surface meaning, it expresses much below the surface which is certainly not less beautiful. Let us take the simple meaning first.

A few vivid and characteristically concentrated sentences introduce us to the scene. This is the Southern wild. The little black boy is born in the far-away deep of Nature's wilderness, and the very colour of his skin seems to symbolise and emphasise the darkness of his bodily life.

But the universal sun is there in pristine power, and the Mother we must needs all have at birth. And his mother teaches him first to worship the Sun as the source of light and life. But this is not all. God is Light; why are *we* in darkness? The reply is one which it

for a mother to make. Our darkness is temporary, protective and preparatory (like the darkness of the womb), until we are ready to issue forth into the light; and she continues:

And we are put on earth a little space,
That we may learn to bear the beams of love.
And these black bodies and this sun-burnt face
Is but a cloud, and like a shady grove.

For when our souls have learn'd the heat to bear,
The cloud will vanish we shall hear his voice,
Saying: come out of the grove my love & care,
And round my golden tent like lambs rejoice.

Thus did my mother say and kissed me.

And here the mother ceases, having found the pure wisdom which love and generation can teach us.

It is now the little black's boy turn to speak, and we notice a change of imagery. The Sun that represented God's home in heaven has already given place to a tent, and the clouds now give place to the lambs sporting round it. In the illustration God is represented by Christ. We are reminded of Blake's lines in one of his MS. writings:¹

God Appears & God is Light
To those poor Souls who dwell in Night
But does a Human Form Display
To those who Dwell in Realms of Day.

The more spiritual Blake's meaning, the more concrete, and human, is his imagery. In this case it is something more. Christ is seated under the "Stems of Vegetation," represented by a willowy tree behind him; and he is shown, with characteristic Blakean symbolism, as sitting with bared left foot advanced. This is a certain sign that

¹ "Auguries of Innocence," Pickering MS.

he is not in some unrealised heaven but upon our very earth, for as God is to be found in Man, so heaven is to be found on earth in

the Eternal which is always present to the wise.¹

What, then, is the wisdom that has brought God to earth, or, if you will, has brought earth to God? It can be nothing other than the little black boy's love of the little English boy: his vision of his own soul as being white as his; and finally, his realisation that his very blackness may be made to render service to the tenderer soul that seems so much nearer the light.

And what Blake meant by this service seems to me very plain. He knew, if any man did, the spiritual price of vision and the debt the visionary owes to those dimmer but steadier lights, men and women whose touch with earth enables them to protect the artist from the mortal consequences of his excess of light. His wife with her earthly common-sense was a veritable overshadowing tree to preserve an earthly home for his fiery spirit. But I do not think Blake had his wife in mind at this moment. If the little black and white boys had any prototypes they were Blake himself and his brother Robert. I do not suggest that these definitely represented them, but they were Blake's figure for something he had himself deeply experienced. Blake knew his brother to be frailer than himself, and must often have regarded him as being more spiritual, both before and after his early death. It was William who had made a home for Robert during life, and after his death it was William who through the fiery labours of Art (in which, as he tells us, symbolically,² his bodily man bore a heavy share), preserved the essence of Robert's delicate spirit from oblivion.

When, therefore, Blake makes the little black boy speak of leaning in joy upon our father's knee, I cannot for a moment suppose that he

¹ "Four Zoas" (Keynes, ii. p. 125).

² Cf. "Jerusalem," 8³⁹. 40.

refers to something which can only happen after death. It is the beatific vision of the artist, be he child or man. The darkness of the body is the earthliness of the vehicle: it is, as it were, Art's bodily means, another form of the reedy pipe and pen, and of the stained water, that before it fades has securely given the vision to earth for ever. The soul may pass to perfect light; but human art and love enshrines and protects it here and now—as Blake enshrined in these “Songs” the spirit of his brother.

Before turning to the last group in “Innocence” to be examined, it will be interesting to look again at Blake's own order in his later issues of the present group. Omitting “Holy Thursday,” which has little more than a historical connection, and including “The Blossom,” which has a deep esoteric meaning, we have seen Blake's usual order to be :

The Little Black Boy,
The Blossom,
The Chimney Sweeper,
The Little Boy lost,
The Little Boy found.

This is a tune played upon two answering themes interpreted by Blake's phrase in “Jerusalem,” “O holy Generation, Image of regeneration.”

In “The Little Black Boy” the Mother begins with the wisdom of generation, and the little black boy continues with the wisdom of regeneration. Then follows “The Blossom,” which we shall find to be the lyrical and hidden image of “holy Generation.” This is followed by the chimney sweeper's vision of regeneration. And in the two parts of “The Little Boy,” we have the errors of this world of generation redeemed by a vision of regeneration. Apart from these inner meanings, it is not easy to account for this constantly repeated order.

The Little Girl Lost

In futurity
I prophetic see,
That the earth from sleep,
(Grave the sentence deep)

Shall arise and seek
For her maker meek:
And the desert wild
Become a garden mild.

In the southern clime,	If her heart does ake,
Where the summers prime,	Then let Lyca wake;
Never fades away;	If my mother sleep,
Lovely Lyca lay.	Lyca shall not weep.

Seven summers old	Frowning frowning night,
Lovely Lyca told,	O'er this desert bright,
She had wanderd long,	Let thy moon arise,
Hearing wild birds song.	While I close my eyes.

Sweet sleep come to me	Sleeping Lyca lay;
Underneath this tree;	While the beasts of prey,
Do father, mother weep,—	Come from caverns deep,
“Where can Lyca sleep.”	View'd the maid asleep

Lost in desert wild	The kingly lion stood
Is your little child.	And the virgin view'd,
How can Lyca sleep,	Then he gambold round
If her mother weep.	O'er the hallowd ground:

Leopards

The Little Girl Lost

In luxury
Lycia lay,
A long path from a deep
Glen of solitude deep;
Shall there be a sign
For her mother's sleep,
And the mother's sleep
Be a sign to her?

In the sunlit glen
Where the sun's rays
Have been seen,
Lycia lay
Seven summers old
Lycia lay,
Her head wandered long
Between wild birds song
Sweet sleep came to her
Lycia lay in her
In the sunlit glen
Where can you sleep.

Lycia lay in her
Lycia lay in her
Lycia lay in her
Lycia lay in her
Lycia lay in her
Lycia lay in her
Lycia lay in her
Lycia lay in her

From the sunlit glen
O'er the desert bright
Let the moon rise
While I close my eyes
Sleeping Lycia lay
While the bees of prey
Come from caverns deep
View the maid asleep

The king's lion's head
And the virgin's head
Then he gazed round
O'er the hallowed ground



Leopards, tygers play,
Round her as she lay;
While the lion old,
Bow'd his mane of gold,

And her bosom lick,
And upon her neck,

From his eyes of flame,
Ruby tears there came;

While the lioness
Loos'd her slender dress,
And naked they convey'd
To caves the sleeping maid.

The Little Girl Found

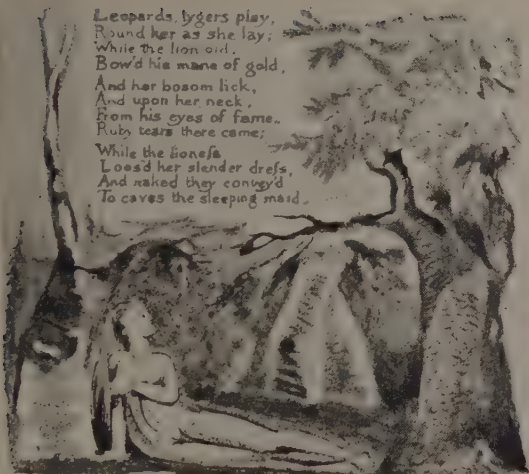
All the night in woe,
Lyca's parents go:
Over vallies deep,
While the desarts weep.

Tired and woe-begone,
Hoarse with making moan:
Arm in arm seven days,
They trac'd the desert ways.

Seven nights they sleep,
Among shadows deep :
And dream they see their child
Starv'd in desert wild.

Pale thro' pathless ways
The fancied image strays,
Famish'd

Leopards, tigers play,
 Round her as she lay;
 While the lion old,
 Bow'd his mane of gold,
 And her bosom lick,
 And upon her neck,
 From his eyes of fame,
 Ruby tears there came;
 While the lioness,
 Loos'd her slender drefs,
 And naked they convey'd
 To caves the sleeping maid.



The Little Girl Found

All the night in woe,
 Lycas parents go,
 Over vallies deep
 While the deserts weep
 Tired and woe begone,
 Hoarse with making moan
 Arm in arm seven days
 They trace the desert ways
 Seven nights they sleep,
 Among shadows deep,
 And dream they see their child
 Stand in desert wild.
 Pale thro' pathless ways
 The fancied image strays



Funaho

Famish'd, weeping, weak
With hollow piteous shriek

They look upon his eyes
Fill'd with deep surprise:
And wondering behold,
A spirit arm'd in gold.

Rising from unrest,
The trembling woman prest,
With feet of weary woe;
She could no further go.

On his head a crown
On his shoulders down,
Flow'd his golden hair.
Gone was all their care.

In his arms he bore,
Her arm'd with sorrow sore:
Till before their way,
A couching lion lay.

Follow me he said, .
Weep not for the maid:
In my palace deep,
Lyca lies asleep.

Turning back was vain,
Soon his heavy mane,
Bore them to the ground;
Then he stalk'd around.

Then they followed,
Where the vision led:
And saw their sleeping child,
Among tygers wild.

Smelling to his prey,
But their fears allay,
When he licks their hands:
And silent by them stands.

To this day they dwell
In a lonely dell
Nor fear the wolfish howl,
Nor the lions growl.

Famish'd weeping weak
With hollow piteous shriek
Rising from unrest,
The trembling woman prest
With feet of weary woe;
She could no further go.

In his arms he bore.
Her arm'd with sorrow sore;
Till before their way,
A couching lion lay.

Turning back was vain,
Soon his heavy mane
Bore them to the ground,
Then he stalk'd around:

Smelling to his prey,
But their fears allay.
When he licks their hands;
And silent by them stands.

They look upon his eyes
Fill'd with deep surprise;
And wondering behold
A spirit arm'd in gold.

On his head a crown,
On his shoulders down,
Flow'd his golden hair,
Gone was all their care.

Follow me he said,
Weep not for the maid;
In my palace deep,
Lyca lies asleep.

Then they followed,
Where the vision led;
And saw their sleeping child,
Among lygers wild.

To this day they dwell
In a lonely dale,
Nor hear the warlike howl
Nor the lion's roar.



IV

SONGS OF LOVE DAWN

PASSAGE SONGS FROM INNOCENCE TO EXPERIENCE

The Little Girl Lost	} Transferred to "Experience"
The Little Girl Found	

D where they { Infant Joy
face one another.¹ { The Blossom

The Voice of the	} Transferred to Experience
Ancient Bard.	

THE LITTLE GIRL LOST AND THE LITTLE GIRL FOUND

THIS beautiful poem is of ballad form. It is much the longest and perhaps the most difficult of the "Songs of Innocence." It must have been, I think, one of the last of them to be written, as its connections are mainly with ideas we find in "Experience," and as soon as the "Songs of Experience" were issued, it was always printed among them, notwithstanding the fact that it disturbed the symmetry of the two parts. "Experience" has its own songs, "A Little BOY Lost" and "A Little GIRL Lost," whereas the double poem, "The

¹ The order in this issue has a special importance as being the first example of the complete work (S. I. E.). It has several features of great interest, which may have all been significant for Blake, as it was the copy he prepared for his most constant friend and patron, Thos. Butts.

Little Boy lost ” and “ The Little Boy found ” (the corresponding poem to this) was always kept in “ Innocence.”

The problem is to understand exactly what Blake means by sleep and what he means by the beasts. Sleep appears to be something in the child which moves the parents to anxiety and grief, in spite of which they make no attempt to watch over her and guard her from the danger of the fierce animals which haunt the night, but which do not actually attack her ; they merely play round, and eventually carry her gently away. When the child is found, she is still sleeping, but is apparently in safe hands—if one may so describe the care of the wild beasts. The parents are satisfied, and henceforth dwell in reconciliation with the beasts in their “lonely dell.” But the child does not wake in the poem, although the theme is expressly stated in the Preludium to be the earth’s *waking* to seek her maker.

The opening part of this story, and the end, might suggest that sleep is a poetic name for death, and that the parents’ discovery is that death is no evil. But in this case the introduction of the wild beasts seems gratuitous, and as attendants or representatives of death both they and their gambols are strangely inappropriate. Moreover, one cannot suppose that Blake would introduce “tygers” and other wild beasts into this poem in so vastly different a sense from that in which “The Tyger” of “Experience” was shortly to appear. The first illustration shows the little girl with a lover, and one suspects a deeper theme.

There is, I think, no room to doubt that the beasts of prey are the passions, and that sleep is the deep oblivion of the spirit in flesh from which very little children are exempt—their “innocence” enabling them still to live in a world of poetry and imagination “hearing wild birds’ song.” Sleep in the child is the budding maturity of the body. But bodily maturity that is so disturbing to the parents in their

child, seems to the child a matter of course in her mother. In this case the poem may be paraphrased thus:

The Little Girl Lost

In futurity
I prophetic see,
That the earth from sleep,
(Grave the sentence deep)

Shall arise and seek
For her maker meek:
And the desert wild,
Become a garden mild.

In the southern clime,
Where the summers prime,
Never fades away:
Lovely Lyca lay.

Seven summers old
Lovely Lyca told,
She had wanderd long,
Hearing wild birds song.

Sweet sleep come to me
Underneath this tree:
Do father mother weep,—
“Where can Lyca sleep.”

Lost in desert wild
Is your little child
How can Lyca sleep,
If her mother weep.

The oblivion of the flesh shall be thrown off when we realise generation as a creative act—“the Image of regeneration”. Then the horror and tangle of sex shall become for us a joyous garden of the “vegetable” life.

Deep in Nature Lyca passed the period of Innocence in the enjoyment of natural art and happiness “hearing wild birds song.”

But at the age of seven a change comes. (What Wordsworth calls “shades of the prison house” Blake calls sleep. The loss of infant imagination is for him associated with the budding of bodily maturity or the oblivion of the flesh.)

But natural bodily growth under the parental tree, (the natural bodily home), cannot be peaceful and natural if parents regard it tragically.

To the parents it seems that their little child has disappeared. The bodily growth fills them with fear. Where is their child and where is she going?

If her heart does ake,
Then let Lyca wake:
If my mother sleep,
Lyca shall not weep.

} The pangs of love shall some day wake her
from the long period of unconscious
growth.¹ Meanwhile her maturing should
be as much a matter of course to the mother
as the mother's maturity is to the child.

Frowning frowning night,
O'er this desert bright,
Let thy moon arise,
While I close my eyes.

} Over this growth of nature, so full of wild
possibilities and fears and withal of wild
brightness and joy, let gentle thoughts
preside.

Sleeping Lyca lay;
While the beasts of prey,
Come from caverns deep,
View'd the maid asleep

} And now strangers begin to take an interest in
the lovely growing child.

The kingly lion stood
And the virgin view'd,
Then he gambold round
O'er the hallowd ground:

The great passions rejoice in so fair and holy
a vision,

Leopards, tygers play,
Round her as she lay;
While the lion old,
Bow'd his mane of gold,

and offer

And her bosom lick,
And upon her neck,
From his eyes of flame,
Ruby tears there came;

in humility

the tenderest acts of
secret homage
and
sympathy.

While the lioness
Loos'd her slender dress,
And naked they convey'd
To caves the sleeping maid.

In their tenderest mood of all they take the
image of her naked beauty to their hearts,
and in the caverns of the mind forever
treasure her unconscious form.

¹ Cp. "When thy little heart does wake
Then the dreadful lightnings break."—MS. poem, *vide infra*, p. 220.

So far I consider we have had nothing but a highly figurative description of something happening on earth. We are next to pass to vision, the vision of the parents, ending with their return to earth in peace, the child still sleeping.

The Little Girl Found

All the night in woe,
Lyca's parents go;
Over vallies deep,
While the desarts weep.

Tired and woe-begone,
Hoarse with making moan;
Arm in arm seven days,
They trac'd the desert ways.

Seven nights they sleep,
Among shadows deep;
And dream they see their child
Starv'd in desert wild.

Pale thro' pathless ways
The fancied image strays,
Famish'd, weeping, weak
With hollow piteous shriek

Rising from unrest,
The trembling woman prest,
With feet of weary woe;
She could no further go.

In his arms he bore,
Her arm'd with sorrow sore;
Till before their way,
A couching lion lay.

There follows a long period of visionary fear and anxiety on the part of the parents. They imagine a child that is not there. (The numbers seven no doubt have some symbolical significance and are connected with Lyca's age.)

Armed only with sorrow

Turning back was vain,
 Soon his heavy mane,
 Bore them to the ground;
 Then he stalk'd around.

} they cannot combat the passions armed with
 love,

Smelling to his prey,
 But their fears allay,
 When he licks their hands;
 And silent by them stands.

} and gentleness.

They look upon his eyes
 Fill'd with deep surprise;
 And wondering behold,
 A spirit arm'd in gold.

On his head a crown
 On his shoulders down,
 Flow'd his golden hair.
 Gone was all their care.

} They realise that the child they lost has been
 found by Love (the glorious universal
 passion of all men for beauty) and is held
 sacredly in Love's "deep" palace of imagina-
 tion and art. This is revealed to them as
 safe and beautiful in "vision".

Follow me he said,
 Weep not for the maid:
 In my palace deep,
 Lyca lies asleep.

Then they followed,
 Where the vision led:
 And saw their sleeping child,
 Among tygers wild.

To this day they dwell
 In a lonely dell
 Nor fear the wolfish howl
 Nor the lion's growl.

(The return to Earth.)
 Henceforth their own love is without fear.

The illustrations are of (*a*) Love; (*b*) the forest of the flesh with its roving passions; (*c*) the same in beatific realisation. The last illustration is one of Blake's most characteristic creations, and was often very beautifully coloured.

INFANT JOY

IN this perfect lyric we reach a kind of epitome of all innocence. Like "The Chimney Sweeper," it begins with a line of prose, and the next line has no rhyme. But the pervading sense of joy and the exquisite simplicity yield one no opportunity for doubt or questionings. Joy, which was the keynote of the opening poem, seems here to smile upon us from the heart and opening source of life.

The illustration is remarkable in more ways than one, and introduces us to a new and wonderful chapter in Blake's thought and art. In most cases where the pictures are illustrative rather than decorative, the illustration consists of figures and the decoration of vegetation. But here and in "The Blossom" it is the vegetation that seems to be the main theme of the illustration, and the figures are at first sight mainly decorative.

What, then, is this wonderful opening flower with its attendant bud? The answer will be partly found in the next Song, which is called "The Blossom," and was almost certainly conceived as a further development of this illustration and of the poem's inner meaning. The Blossom's own illustration forms, as it were, a fourth chapter, conferring a wonderful completeness to the theme which we are now to examine.

In one of Blake's unpublished illustrations to Young's "Night Thoughts," we meet this Blossom again; but the scene enacted within appears to be a different one, and more in conformity with Blake's symbolical use of flowers to signify women and their love favours.¹

¹ This symbolism is constant in the MS. and the S. E. It is often used quite obviously, as in the confession "before my flower of love was lost," or in the deleted lines:

"I beheld the Priest by night
He embracd the blossom bright."

Infant Joy

I have no name
I am but two days old.—
What shall I call thee?
I happy am
Joy is my name,—
Sweet joy befall thee!

Pretty joy!
Sweet joy but two days old.
Sweet joy I call thee:
Thou dost smile.
I sing the while
Sweet joy befall thee.



I have no name
 I am but two days old --
 What shall I call thee?
 Happy am
 Joy is my name --
 Sweet joy befall thee!

Be thy joy!
 Sweet joy but two days old.
 Sweet joy I call thee!
 Thou dost smile.
 I sing the while
 Sweet joy befall thee.

The blossom there contains a young woman with bended knees, but lightly balanced on her toes, with an eager and rapt forward gaze, holding in her hand a chrysalis, above which rises a butterfly. The chrysalis is the symbol of mortality and the butterfly of resurrection. But the drama of death and resurrection takes place within the flower of love, which is the chalice of the womb itself, for here the worm of the flesh awakens to new life.¹ There can be no doubt, I think, that the young woman framed in the symbolical blossom, with the gift of the chrysalis (the embryo) in her possession, is pictured in the rapt moment of "holy Generation" or conception.

The same divine moment is here exquisitely conceived as an Annunciation scene; the messenger greets the mother, who holds the babe-to-be in her lap; without name, because as yet without individuality,² and "but two days old," because God made heaven the second day.³ The Angel has the butterfly wings of resurrection, and summons the babe to Being by a question. The child answers, by speaking its first stirrings of consciousness, which are in essence "happiness"; the "Joy" of which it is conceived and begotten. The divine messenger that has alighted in the very heart of the flower through the opening, represents the life-factor of the father, a bodily and spiritual presence in the moment of generation. And the last words of the first verse are his speeding of the new body and soul.

The second verse is the mother's, echoing the father's call and (in the fifth and sixth line) singing as her "Magnificat" her own benediction that repeats the father's.

This poem utters the joy of inception as the "Infant Sorrow" of "Experience" utters the tragedy of birth. For "Joys impregnate,

¹ "Yet helpless it lay like a Worm
In the trembling womb
To be moulded into existence." "Urizen," ch. vi. 4.

² *Vide supra*, p. 92, note.

³ In this case heaven opened in this world (*vide* Note overleaf).

Sorrows bring forth.”¹ It closely resembles in theme the lines Blake wrote of his own birth or inception:

The Angel that presided oer my birth
Said Little creature formd of Joy & Mirth
Go love without the help of any Thing on Earth.

Blake had originally written in the second line “formd *for* Mirth,” but makes his meaning, and that of the present poem, far more explicit by the significant change to: “formd *of* Joy & Mirth.” The word “love” in the last line has been misread, but not misunderstood, as “live,” for it means both; “Go, live and love.” The Blakean capital to the word Thing expresses the idea that material things are not for the purely spiritual soul of man.²

NOTE.—The esoteric meaning of a lyric so perfect in its simple meaning as “Infant Joy” can only be regarded as finally established if a very definite inner meaning can be found for the second line “I am but two days old.”

It is only as I go to press that I have at last found in the illustrations to this poem and the following one, a clue which I think will certainly interest, and probably satisfy, the critic and student. As we shall see in the sequel, the Mother here is identical with the larger winged figure in “The Blossom.” In her lap (*i.e.* “near” her bosom) she holds the second of the seven little cherubs that trace the “current of creation.” These two (symbolised in the poem as the Sparrow and the Robin) represent, I suggest, the first two days of creation; the creation, that is, of Man (who is the Blakean Universe) repeated in the creation of each man. The six days culminating in the Sabbath or seventh day would then be represented by the Cherubs thus: First day, Light—the Love-dawn (*v. inf.*, p. 162); Second day, the parting of the Waters by the Firmament—heaven opening amidst the waters of generation; Third day, the creation of Earth—Innocence (*v. seq.*); Fourth day, the creation of the heavenly bodies (Urizen) symbolising the opening of the Thought-experience; Fifth day, the creation of the Birds, symbolising Inspiration (perhaps Luvah); and the Sixth day, representing the creation of the male and female, who meet in the Seventh day, symbolical of Beulah (Marriage).

In this case “I am but two days old” would mean ‘In my journey through Time I have only reached the moment of impregnation, or “holy Generation” in the body.’

¹ “The Marriage,” p. 8.

² Cf. “The Infant Joy is beautiful, but its anatomy

Horrible ghast & deadly.”—“Jerusalem,” 22²²⁻²³.

The intensity of this passage always suggests to me that Blake was contrasting the unborn “Joy” with the foetus prematurely born, *v. inf.*, pp. 131 ff.

THE BLOSSOM

WE are already half way to understanding these two curious little verses.¹ A poem that seems at first a fanciful little garden-song without much meaning, and then a cradle-song in which the mother calls her babe a sparrow when it is happy, and a robin (to rhyme with sobbin'), when it is tearful, is in fact the supreme passage song between the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul. The merry sparrow, like the first laughter of the child in the "Piper," symbolises Innocence, and the sobbing Robin, like the child's tears, symbolises Experience rather than grief. The Little Boy was "found" in the first experience of his own Thought.² The Girl "blossoms" into experience through consummated love.

But there was nothing for Blake which Art might not touch. The spirituality which made him call the body "a portion of Soul" gives him the simplicity and frankness of archaic thought, and as the bud and flower in the previous design illustrated the unopened and the opened womb, so this illustration is a poetic and symbolic rendering of the phallus prone and erect, a pillar of vegetable flame breaking at the crest into multitudinous life of many happy spirits, one of which finds its home in the lap of the happy mother, winged for a reason we shall see.

In the poem three out of the six lines in each verse are the same,

¹ Mr Damon, who is a very honest as well as a very learned and able Blake scholar, thought so little of this poem that he suggested Blake only kept it in his book because of the beauty of the illustration. He has since confessed his persuasion that the interpretation here given is "quite certainly right," though it was not till he considered the illustration that conviction dawned.

² Cf. ". . . think not for themselves till Experience teaches them . . .," and *supra*, Preface, p. 39; also p. 282.

and it is these that describe the maiden in her moment of earthly beatitude. In the second line "leaves so green" describes the body in its vernal beauty. The third line speaks a joy which does not change as the great passage is effected in the second verse. She is still, in her "Experience," "a happy Blossom." The last line in each verse introduces the magic word "My," than which no other word can speak the intensely personal quality of love's moment.

The birds are the male element as seen by the maiden. They represent the whole range of the lover's love, from the winged thought to the accomplished act. In the sacred chamber of the annunciation it will be remembered that the angel of "holy Generation" was endowed with the symbolic wings of a butterfly.

There is an exquisite significance in the changes of metaphor to describe the changes in the always winged love-thought (which is at the same time the love-act) from the sparrow to the robin and finally the butterfly spirit. First the gallant and laughing spirit of the sparrow as he speeds "under leaves so green." Then the bird of Calvary (like the weeping stars, or the sons of God shouting, broken-hearted for very joy) sweeps into the throbbing moment of Creation the whole gamut of earth's grief and heaven's rapture. The child wept with joy to hear the Piper's song, and the maiden hears, rather than feels, the beating of a joy too deep for thought as it seems to break in tears upon the crest of ecstatic realisation and accomplishment.

If the poem paints the experience of the maid, the illustration paints the male, and so the "wings" are transferred to the woman and what belongs to her. For, as the lover's love seemed winged thought to her—a vision and a voice from heaven—to the man it is the maiden herself who is an angelic vision or ideal, and this more especially as it concerns her motherhood, which, in the moment of the love-act, is still only realised in thought.

The Blossom.

Merry Merry Sparrow
Under leaves so green
A happy Blossom
Sees you swift as arrow
Seek your cradle narrow
Near my Bosom.

Pretty Pretty Robin
Under leaves so green
A happy Blossom
Hears you sobbing sobbing
Pretty Pretty Robin
Near my Bosom.



The Blossom.

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Under leaves so green
A happy Blossom
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We must examine more closely these delicate spirits in love's crest, which are seven in number and move in clockwise motion¹ (always significant for Blake of the passage through life-experience to beatitude). The first spirit descends joyously (but without wings), the second finds its home "near my bosom" in the lap of the future mother, and is also unwinged. These are the sparrow and the robin from the male point of view, the gallant and joyous approach and the broken rapture of conquering surrender.² But after conception and birth (in vision as yet, and therefore winged) begins once more the round of Innocence and Experience from which life springs again. This is told in three scenes. Immediately beyond the Mother is a little cherub seated firmly on the parental stem and poring over a book.³ The next figure stands erect and is summoned upwards by one still higher, and the last two meet in a paradise of love which is to renew the happy circle of life. We can almost hear Blake saying: "Ah! my child, I see you there reading my 'happy songs,' but the day will come when the songs are your own and your heaven is not a picture-book, but the paradise of another's bosom."

In the poem and in the picture there is so pervading an element of the ideal and of the visionary that one might be tempted to think the whole drama was a purely spiritual one with no basis upon earth, were it not, firstly, for the definite symbolism of the green leaves, which indicate the bodily life; and, secondly, for the unmistakable

¹ Cf. the seven angels on the title-page of the "Job."

² Remembering the pulsing tears of the Robin, we can follow Blake's line of thought more closely when he wrote in the "Auguries of Innocence":

Every Tear from Every Eye
Becomes a Babe in Eternity
This is caught by Females bright
And return'd to its own delight.

³ It will be remembered that Job and his family in their days of Innocence are studying books. *Vide* Damon, p. 226, and Wicksteed's "Job," p. 90.

significance of the swift "arrow" and the "narrow" cradle, poetic symbols of the male and female organs. But though the drama is certainly in the flesh it is equally in the spirit, for "Man has no Body distinct from his Soul."¹ The symbolism and the very form of the verse suggest a bodily and a spiritual union, complete and secure, of the passive and the active element of love, the maid and the man. The illustrations to these companion poems "Infant Joy" and "The Blossom" each represent one of these aspects completed. The father's love-messenger brought benediction into the holy chamber of the mother's flower—the mother-vision wings blessing upon the father's spring of passion.

"Infant Joy" and "The Blossom" were placed facing one another in the first issue of the completed work ("S.I.E."), an issue in several ways significant.² Blake's success in weaving these poems and pictures (if it is success for an artist to perfect a work of art for himself alone) may have had a decisive effect upon his career, begetting that hard saying, uttered some years later, that "Allegory addressed to the Intellectual powers while it is altogether hidden from the Corporeal Understanding is My Definition of the Most Sublime Poetry" (Letter, July 6, 1803).

Let us now return to certain other poems of Innocence. The frequent association of "The Blossom" with "The Lamb" (where "He became a little child"), and later with "The Little Black Boy" and "The Chimney Sweeper," is explained by their symbolical meaning. Interpreted, all speak of God becoming Man or of generation as the type of regeneration—the discovery, or creation, of heaven upon earth.

There is another poem and another illustration which will now

¹ "The Marriage," p. 4.

² *Vide supra*, p. 115, note, and *infra*, "A Little GIRL Lost," p. 160.

speak with enlarged utterance to us. The poem is "Night." If we suppose the wild beasts to represent the passions, as in "The Little Girl Lost," the meaning seems to be this: The angels move about in the dark world of the flesh seeking to protect innocence and control desire. But if desire breaks through their control they *catch*, like "Females bright," the "tears" of propagation and return each "to its own delight"—or, in other words, "recieve each mild spirit new worlds to inherit." It is then that the Passions "washd in life's river" become protective and tender—as the father protects his offspring: "pitying the tender cries and walking round the fold."

As already suggested, there is a hint of this in the illustration. At the foot of the tree lies a wild beast in his lair. But at the top of the tree are two beings that appear to prefigure the mother and the approaching child in "The Blossom." The second illustration of "Night" also suggests the passage to earth, while the little figures on the left of the first illustration clearly represent each "returnd to its own delight."

The illustration to which we shall now return with a new interest is the illustration of "The Divine Image." The illustration to "The Blossom" shows us the spiritual beauty of the spring of "holy Generation"; the illustration to "The Divine Image" shows us the incomparably richer and more varied, but kindred, beauty of Regeneration; where Christ stands at the root uplifting naked man and woman to rise into ever-expanding joys of light and love.

THE VOICE OF THE ANCIENT BARD

THIS short poem is placed here because it was sometimes so placed by Blake, and it appears to me to be an invitation to Experience—the experience of love and of thought. It was later superseded by the much finer “Introduction” to Experience, which we have called “The Bard.” In some copies it is placed at the end of the “Songs of Experience” as though to restore confidence after the terrible visions shown us.

After the first line, which never finds a rhyme, the verse moves along brightly for three couplets and then breaks into a strange irregular quatrain, evidently intended to emphasise the stumbling and inconclusive course of those who wish to thwart youth’s impulses with tradition and reason and anxious care. I am sure Blake intended it to be sung, and one can almost hear the harp of the Bard as one looks at the illustration.

The illustration shows the “youth of delight” on the Bard’s left still hesitating, while those on his right have accepted his invitation and are happy in love. The expression “truth new born” is clearly equivalent to “regeneration,” so that we may regard “the opening morn” as definitely descriptive of “Generation.” For the passage we have so often quoted from “Jerusalem,” “O holy generation, Image of regeneration,” is here exactly expressed in the invocation:

Youth of delight come hither
And see *the opening morn* [*i.e.* Generation]
Image of *truth new born*. [*i.e.* regeneration]

The Voice of the
Ancient Bard.

Youth of delight come hither.
And see the opening morn,
Image of truth new-born.
Doubt is fled & clouds of reason,
Dark disputes & artful teasing,
Folly is an endless maze.
Tangled roots perplex her ways,
How many have fallen there!
They stumble all night over bones of the dead:
And they feel they know not what but care:
And wish to lead others when they should be led.

14
*The Voice of the
Ancient Bard.*

Youth of delight come hither,
And see the opening morn,
Image of truth new born
Doubt is fled & clouds of reason
Dark disputes & arthul teasing,
Folly is an endless maze,
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They stumble all night over bones of the dead;
And feel they know not what but care;
And wish to lead others when they should be led.



EPILOGUE TO INNOCENCE

"THEL" AND A QUERY

AND now before we pass to "Experience," which was not engraved until five years later, we must examine another work of Blake's engraved the very same year as the "Songs of Innocence." It is full of the delicate spirit of Innocence and yet contains something so new that we are almost compelled to ask what had happened in those intervening weeks or months to account for so strange, and indeed terrible, a blast from Blake's angelic orchestra.

"The Book of Thel" opens with:

THEL's Motto

Does the Eagle know what is in the pit?
Or wilt thou go ask the Mole:
Can Wisdom be put in a silver rod?
Or Love in a golden bowl?

This appears to express the doubt whether the things of earth can be known by the spiritual, or the things of the spirit be confined in the things that weigh and measure. I do not doubt that the rod and the bowl mean more than this, but what concerns us here is Thel's scepticism as to the possibility of approach between spirit and matter.

The first line of the poem is difficult because of the mysterious word "Mne," which earlier editors used to regard as a misprint for "The."

The daughters of Mne Seraphim led round their sunny flocks.
All but the youngest:

Mr Damon, with more learning, suggests that Blake meant to

write "Bne Seraphim," which he suggests he took from Agrippa's "Occult Philosophy," whence he got other names. No doubt this gave Blake the suggestion, but I think he wrote exactly what he meant to write, and that "Mne" was his anagram for "Men," the expression "Mne Seraphim" being equivalent to his later expression, "Humanity Divine," or what he often called, at this time, the "Poetic Genius."

The story of this youngest daughter of the "Poetic Genius" is full of beauty and simplicity. She laments her own transient nature, and is comforted by the transient flower, the transient cloud, the lowly worm, and, lowliest of all, the clod of clay. There are passages of rare beauty, as when the cloud assures her that:

when I pass away
It is to tenfold life, to love, to peace, and raptures holy:
Unseen descending, weigh my light wings upon balmy flowers;
And court the fair-eyed dew, to take me to her shining tent
The weeping virgin, trembling kneels before the risen sun,
Till we arise link'd in a golden band and never part:
But walk united bearing food to all our tender flowers.

But Thel fears that she is not like the Cloud. She has enjoyed the flowers and the birds, but since she can do nothing for them she has lost delight in them.

because I fade away;
And all shall say, without a use this shining woman liv'd;
Or did she only live to be at death the food of worms.

The Cloud reclind upon his airy throne and answerd thus.

Then if thou art the food of worms, O virgin of the skies,
How great thy use, how great thy blessing; everything that lives,
Lives not alone nor for itself: fear not and I will call

The weak worm from its lowly bed, and thou shalt hear its voice.
Come forth worm of the silent valley, to thy pensive queen.

The helpless worm arose and sat upon the Lillys leaf.
And the bright Cloud saild on, to find his partner in the vale.

The worm and the clod reveal their happiness in giving and receiving, and in being humblest portions of a whole they dimly understand; and then comes the dramatic climax of the poem when the clod offers Thel entrance to the earth with power to return. For many readers this terrific ending is a merely unfortunate termination to an otherwise lovely poem. But as a matter of fact the purpose of the poem is in this ending, without which it would never have been conceived.

The eternal gates terrific porter lifted the northern bar¹:
Thel enter'd in & saw the secrets of the land unknown:
She saw the couches of the dead, & where the fibrous roots
Of every heart on earth infixes deep its restless twists:
A land of sorrows & of tears where never smile was seen.

She wanderd in the land of clouds thro' valleys dark, listning
Dolours & lamentations: waiting oft beside a dewy grave
She stood in silence, listning to the voices of the ground.
Till to her own grave plot she came, & there she sat down.
And heard this voice of sorrow breathed from the hollow pit.

Why cannot the Ear be closed to its own destruction?
Or the glistning Eye to the poison of a smile!
Why are Eyelids stord with arrows ready drawn,
Where a thousand fighting men in ambush lie!
Or an Eye of gifts & graces showring fruits & coined gold!

¹ The North is where the sun never rises above the horizon, and is therefore symbolical of the underworld. Thel's descent to Earth is thus represented as past "the northern bar."

Why a Tongue impress'd with honey from every wind?
 Why an Ear, a whirlpool fierce to draw creations in?
 Why a Nostril wide inhaling terror trembling & affright
 Why a tender curb upon the youthful burning boy?
 Why a little curtain of flesh on the bed of our desire?

The Virgin started from her seat, & with a shriek,
 Fled back unhinderd till she came into the vales of Har.

The first point of interest in this poem is that it reverses what has hitherto been Blake's method of unfolding "Twofold Vision." Hitherto he has used images of Earth to expound Eternal truths, as we have seen in "The Little Black Boy" and other poems. But here the scene is laid in "eternal vales," and Thel is addressed: "O virgin of the skies." She is a heavenly being, dwelling in eternity, but apparently not immortal, as she is "to fade away like morning beauty from her mortal day." And her plaint is:

Ah! Thel is like a watry bow, and like a parting cloud.
 Like a reflection in a glass, like shadows in the water.

But these are Blake's images to represent not the eternal, but the world of Time and Space.

What does it all mean? The answer must be sought in the first place in the fact that "it is impossible to think without images of somewhat on earth" (Lavater). Under the figure, then, of an earthly maiden examining the lower but kindred life of flower and worm and cloud and clay, Blake describes a divine spirit examining the lower but kindred life of man. And as the earthly maid is destined to die and descend into the grave, to join the fraternity of worms, so Blake wishes to represent it as the fate of heavenly beings to descend and become generated on earth.¹

¹ Cf. "Nor can any consummate bliss without being Generated on Earth."—"Jerusalem," 86⁴⁸; cf. also "Jerusalem," 69⁸⁰.

This, I take it, has already happened to Thel's sisters who have entered happily into the circle of existence where they "led round their sunny flocks." But Thel shrinks from the thought, conceiving that to do so will be to lose her *spiritual* identity. Nevertheless, she is attracted by the idea of service and of becoming a living member of the great community of Life. At last she is given the opportunity to investigate this "lower" life without sacrificing her power of immediate return. She is not to be compelled, once the dread gate is passed, to complete the terrible circle of earthly existence. She may come back by the short route instead of going forward by the long one.

Finally, horrified by what she sees and hears in "her own grave plot," she seizes, before it is too late, her option of return.

Now surely all this can only mean one thing. The grave plot is the place of her mortal body, not yet entered. She looks at it but cannot face the gloom and tragedy of an earthly life.

One cannot but ask—is this story Blake's explanation of why there are spirits conceived in joy that are never to be born. Is it the spiritual story of the tragedy of miscarriage, and was the story a personal one ?¹

When Blake wrote "Infant Joy," had the Angel of Annunciation visited his wife with the promise of motherhood ? A few months

¹ It is not, of course, necessary to suppose that everything a poet writes feelingly about has been a recent part of his own experience. But Blake seems to have been through *some* formative experience between the writing of the "Songs of Innocence" and "The Book of Thel," and there is no intrinsic improbability in its having been the appropriate one suggested by the later book. It seems at all events legitimate to make the venture of a guess. In his "Real Blake" Mr Ellis wove a story around the poem "William Bond" which included such a disaster. But "William Bond" seems to me to belong to a different period, and to have another significance (*vide infra*, p. 269, note). As Mr Ellis does not tell us the source of his information, we have to guess whether it is a pure guess on his part.

later when he wrote "Thel" was it to relieve the sorrow of their disappointed hopes? ¹ "What wonder," he seems to say, "if the delicate spirit of innocence, even when opportunity has been offered, dare not enter a world as full of sordid fears and hopes as ours."

In any case it was to be many years after Blake told of Thel's flight back "into the vales of Har," before he won through to a new serenity.

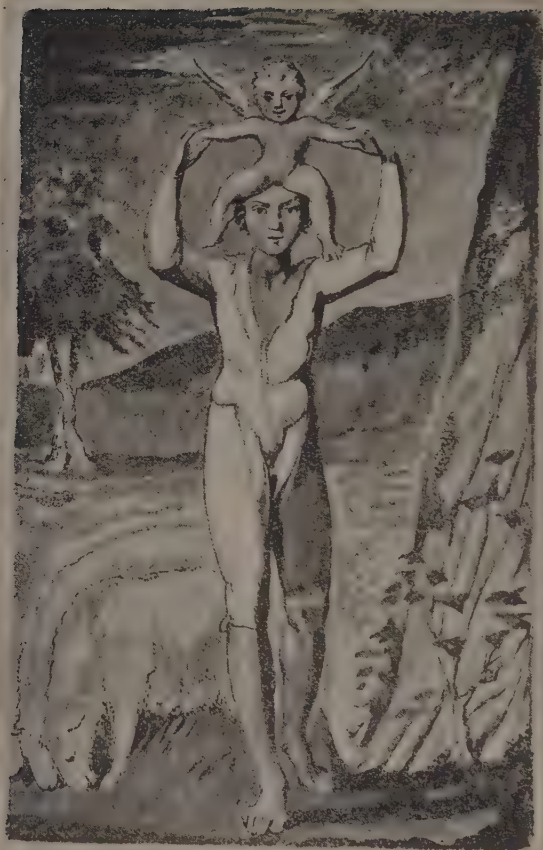
¹ If the reader compares the Frontispiece of "The Gates of Paradise" with the motto of "The Keys of the Gates":

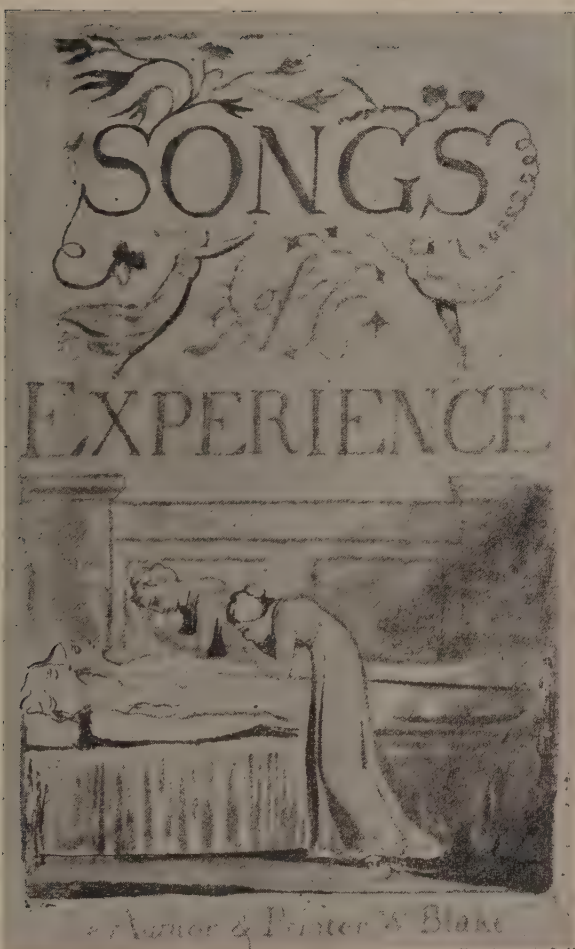
"The Catterpillar on the Leaf
Reminds thee of thy Mothers Grief" .

he will, I think, have very little doubt that the lines in Thel:

"The helpless worm arose and sat upon the Lilly's leaf,"

is descriptive of the generative act which was to send Thel forth on her journey through the bodily life. Thel's Motto probably voices the query whether she, a spiritual being, *can* be forced to enter earthly existence by the "rod" and the "bowl" of generation.





PART II
EXPERIENCE

INTRODUCTION TO "EXPERIENCE"

INNOCENCE is childhood and Experience is maturity. But the "Songs of Innocence" from the first included something more than childish happiness, and came to include the adolescent in the dawn of mature experience—that is to say, the condition when we discover life for ourselves; when we begin to do our own thinking, and when romantic love and experience in love wakes us to a new life. Probably Blake had not yet the idea of calling this the state of Experience. But the first poems on lost children show that he already conceives childhood as embracing different 'states of the soul.' The title-page of the "Songs of Experience," where grown children are weeping the death of their lost parents, expresses the reverse aspect of the same idea. In either case Experience means loss of our dear ones. Growing up is the necessary breaking away from the older generation as the experience of life becomes more personal and first-hand. In his great MS. poem ("Vala, *or* The Four Zoas"), written a few years later, he says that Experience is bought with the price of *all* that a man hath—"his house, his wife, his children."

But, though the idea of this mature "state" was present at least in germ in the "Songs of Innocence," the manuscript book suggests that the impulse to write a sequel to Innocence—describing the reverse side of the picture, and often giving very powerful and bitter versions of the themes so beautifully treated in Innocence—was the direct consequence of a bitter incident in Blake's own experience. The minor tragedy of "My Pretty Rose Tree" speaks in thinly veiled symbolism of Blake's relations with his wife, and was the first manuscript entry in the sketch-book.¹

¹ *Vide infra*, Part III, p. 214

This is immediately followed by some sixty short poems, evidently written at no long intervals, one of the last of which is entitled "Motto to the Songs of Innocence and of Experience." This is the first time the term experience is used in connection with these songs,¹ and about one-third of the preceding poems were afterwards selected to form the "Songs of Experience" together with a few transferences from the "Songs of Innocence" and only four additions. The three transferred poems were perhaps put in to redeem the work from being a book of disillusionment, which was, with few exceptions, the note of the Songs selected from the MS. Experience must be shown as a State of wider significance. Of the four added poems one is the "Introduction" which Blake composed to correspond to the "Piper" of Innocence when he decided to write a sequel.²

The other three come on the last three leaves of the first issue of the "Songs of Experience," and the two most important ("A Little GIRL Lost" and "To Tirzah") use symbolic names for the first, and perhaps the only, time in the "Songs."³ They reveal Blake in a new phase, in which the oppositions of life seem more irreconcilable and dramatic.

There thus seem to be three stages in the idea of Experience.

¹ "Experience" is used on the flyleaf to his copy of Swedenborg's *Divine Love and Wisdom* in a pencil note that was probably written earlier than this. The sentence is partly obliterated, but this fragment can be deciphered, "Suffering and distress," and then above the line, "*i.e.* Experience." (I do not follow Mr Keynes's reading here, but the point is not of great importance.) The idea is also present in the Tractates (c. 1788). . . . "the faculty which experiences. This faculty I treat of." ("All RELIGIONS are ONE.")

² The second half of the "Bard" was written to lead up to "Earth's Answer," a poem originally composed as an answer to a very different poem in the MS. This is one of the most interesting instances of the way Blake manipulated his inspirations in the composition of his finished work, *vide infra*, pp. 236 f.

³ The name Lyca in "The Little Girl Lost," may possibly be symbolical, but I imagine was not. The surname "Dacre" in "The Chimney Sweeper" is more probably so, *vide supra*, p. 110, note.

First the adolescent gaining of independent experience in thought ("The Little Boy found") and sex ("The Blossom"), which is still Innocence; then a strong vein of disillusionment and anger associated with a probable experience of Blake's own, and represented by most of the poems in the MS. book; and, finally, the beginning of something which leads us on to Blake's later work, first in "The Marriage,"¹ and later still in the prophetic books. But a not less important progress appears in the MS. book itself.

The Songs immediately following "My Pretty Rose Tree" mainly treat of disillusionment in various phases of love. They become darker as he proceeds, and under the title of "In a Mirtle Shade," he writes a far bitterer version of the Rose Tree theme, later to be somewhat pruned under the title "To my Mirtle." At last, however, he breaks through the growing darkness and almost without warning he produces his greatest lyric, "The Tyger."

With the creation of "The Tyger," Blake begins to recover objectivity and to an increasing extent turns the flame of his anger on to things that concern the woes of others rather than his own.²

In grouping the "Songs of Experience" I have reversed the order adopted in "Innocence" in the matter of Love and Thought. In a sense the whole theme in both parts is Love. But the passionate love in which Innocence culminates is also the disturbing power in the soul which introduces Experience. It is only with the revival of thought or imagination, the power of the mind, that love recovers its universal essence.

The order in which I group the whole book may be summarised

¹ Mr Damon first suggested the year 1793 as the date of "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell." This would place it after the MS. and before the engraving of "Experience," and therefore probably before the latest Songs were added. There is almost everything in favour of this view.

² *Vide* "Introduction to Songs of Prophecy," *infra*, pp. 187.

as being (a) Thoughtless Innocence; (b) Innocence and Sorrow ("Night," "A Dream," "On Another's Sorrow"); (c) Imagination restoring Innocence or Happiness ("The Little Black Boy," "The Chimney Sweeper," "The Little Boy found"); (d) Passion crowning Innocence ("The Little Girl Lost" and "Found" and "The Blossom"); (e) Passion initiating Experience ("My Pretty Rose Tree," and what I have called Songs of the Heart's Experience); (f) Thought returning to examine life and love more deeply and to find it full of tragedy and darkness ("Infant Sorrow," "The Human Abstract," etc.), with only faint notes of hope ("The Little Vagabond," "The Fly"); (g) Imagination returning in prophetic power to purge life and champion Love, in "The Tyger" and the Social Songs.

This order is intended to emphasise the spiritual facts by grouping the Songs into songs of love, thought, and prophecy; but they are taken in each section itself in the order of their composition. In this way we get the actual movements of Blake's mind as he was composing the "Songs of Experience," shown three times over from different points of view which may be summarised in Blakean phraseology as the female, the male, and the Human or Divine points of view. The female consists of disillusion and restoration in sex; the male of disillusion and restoration of the mind, and the Divine of disillusion and restoration in Society. We shall then (in Part III) turn to the MS. and show the three strands in combination with many other poems: the matrix from which he drew out the main body of his "Songs of Experience."

It only remains to say that Blake continued for many years to think about Experience. It came to be almost synonymous with dearly bought wisdom,¹ and in one of his latest MSS. he wrote (and

¹ Cf. the great passage in the "Four Zoas" (Night the Second), beginning, "What is the price of Experience, do men buy it for a song?"

subsequently deleted, probably on account of another statement in the passage) the remark that "Jerusalem" is a spirit of Experience.¹

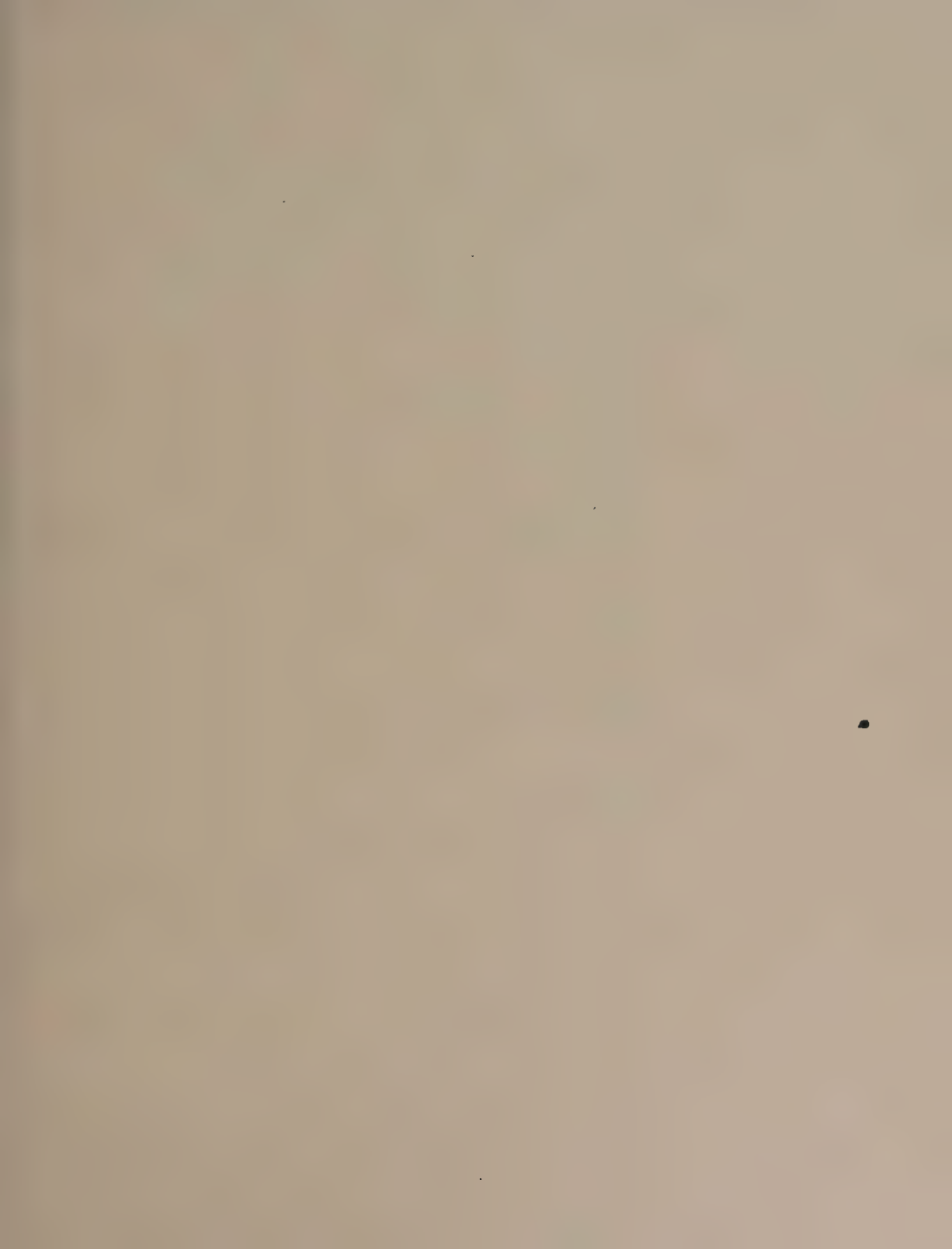
There is finally an interesting possibility that Blake had the "Two Contrary States of the Soul" in his mind as he elaborated some of the designs in his very latest and, in some ways, most beautiful inventions. In No. 93 of the Dante designs, Dante and Beatrice are shown spiritually and symbolically entering "each others Bosom." "When in Eternity Man converses with Man they enter / Into each other's Bosom (which are Universes of delight) / In mutual interchange, and first their Emanations meet."² In the next design (94) St Peter appears to them with a key in his right hand. St Peter represents Faith, and we may be sure the Key of Heaven was for Blake "Imagination." Plate 95 shows the entrance of St James, representing Hope. He seems to be in earnest expostulation with St Peter, who points upwards with his right hand, but transfers the key to his left. In Plate 96, St John the Evangelist enters, representing Love, and is symbolically shown as spiritually one with Beatrice, an Emanation of her mind.³ He appears to be mediating between St Peter and St James, and the position of his hands is very peculiar and must in a Blake design have some special significance. Now it is noticeable that in the Frontispiece to "Innocence" the Piper is shown with advanced left foot, while the corresponding figure in the Frontispiece to "Experience" proceeds with advanced right foot. There are other reasons for regarding the left or earthly side of Man as corresponding to the State of Innocence,

¹ "A Vision of the Last Judgment."

² "Jerusalem," 88³⁻⁵.

³ An emanation and an individual may be the same. "Man is adjoind to Man by his Emanative portion." "Jerusalem," 44³⁸ (Everyman Version, p. 39). Compare with this, "His Emanation, yet his Wife till the sleep of death is past." "Jerusalem," 14¹⁴. We see and understand one another in visionary light, so that my "ideal" of you enables me to know You.

and the right or divine side to that of Experience; and in the finale to the Book of Job, it is nearly certain that some of the symbolism is intended to show that Man's way to God is through the materialising of Experience and the spiritualising of Innocence. So it may be that Blake's final message of "Love" to Man and Woman (represented by St John speaking to Dante and Beatrice in highest heaven), is that Faith, representing the State of Experience with the Key of Imagination, must come down to Earth; whereas Hope, representing the State of Innocence, must ascend to heaven. Peter now has his key in his lowered left hand, James has his right hand actually in John's heaven of Love. John's right hand points across to James and downwards; his left hand, folded across to Peter, points upwards. The spiritual state must be made material, the material state must be made spiritual. "God becomes as we are that we may be as he is." In other words the visionary or ideal world must be brought down to earth, must be made our own, must be embodied in our lives, whatsoever it may cost, and this is Experience. But the seat of happiness, at first a matter of innocent earthly well-being, must be lifted above the personal life and found in Eternity and things eternal.



Introduction.

Hear the voice of the Bard!
Who Present, Past, & Future sees
Whose ears have heard,
The Holy Word,
That walk'd among the ancient trees.

Calling the lapsed Soul
And weeping in the evening dew:
That might controll
The starry pole:
And fallen fallen light renew!

O Earth O Earth return!
Arise from out the dewy grass:
Night is worn,
And the morn
Rises from the slumberous mass.

Turn away no more:
Why wilt thou turn away
The starry floor
The watry shore
Is giv'n thee till the break of day.

Introduction.

Hear the voice of the Bard!
Who Present, Past, & Future sees
Whose ears have heard,
The Holy Ward,
That walk'd among the ancient trees.

Calling the lapsed Soul,
And weeping in the evening dew;
That might controll
The starry pole;
And fallen fallen light renew!

O Earth O Earth return!
Arise from out the dewy grass;
Night is worn,
And the morn
Rises from the slumberous mass.

Turn away no more:
Why wilt thou turn away
The starry floor
The watry shore
Is given thee till the break of day.



INTRODUCTORY SONGS

THE BARD—EARTH'S ANSWER

THE BARD

"INTRODUCTION"

THIS sombre poem more clearly defines the character of the "Bard," already figured in the verse with which we closed "Innocence." Together with its sequel it introduces us to "Experience" as the Piper introduced us to "Innocence." The former is at first the pure lyrist piping only for present joy, whereas the latter chants with prophetic voice and sees all time, "present, past, and future." The "Piper" draws his inspiration from a visionary child in the clouds. The "Bard" draws his from the Holy Spirit walking upon ancient earth. The reference is to Jehovah walking in the Garden of Eden in the evening and discovering the trespass of Adam. Did "the lapsed soul" but listen to that voice descending, as it does into this twilight world, the wheel of heaven could even now be turned and the light of day restored to earth. Thus the "Bard's" message is an appeal to Earth. The "Piper," it will be remembered, begins in this wild earth, soars in vision to heaven, and returns to earth to complete his work. This movement we have found, and shall find, repeated in many of Blake's songs and visions. Here the figure is changed, and instead of the Soul returning to Earth, it is Earth herself that is bid return. The lines that follow can only be understood if we know the thoughts that were uppermost in Blake's mind as he wrote. The dew is matter, the grass is flesh, out of which earth is called to arise. Night is the dark period of disillusionment in the State of Experience, and the morn is the joy of fulfilled and liberated

love. The failure of man to realise the beauty of the love of man and maid is typical of all his failure to embrace the joy of the artist. The stars are the broken lights of eternity which even Night cannot quench, for the beauty of life and love are never wholly hidden, though seen as we see them, without poetry and divine inspiration, they are but the "wat'ry shore," the materialistic margin, of the full day of divine beatitude.

The eternal character of the Bard's vision, inspired by the Divine Word itself, confers on youth an authority above that of parents and elders, leading it into the light of direct experience.

The illustration represents Earth lying upon the watery shore and with the starry floor as background.

EARTH'S Answer

Earth raised up her head,
From the darkness dread & drear,
Her light fled:
Stony dread!
And her locks cover'd with grey despair.

Prison'd on watry shore
Starry Jealousy does keep my den
Cold and hoar
Weeping o'er
I hear the father of the ancient men

Selfish father of men
Cruel jealous selfish fear
Can delight
Chain'd in night
The virgins of youth and morning bear.

Does spring hide its joy
When buds and blossoms grow?
Does the sower!
Sow by night?
Or the plowman in darkness plow?

Break this heavy chain,
That does freeze my bones around
Selfish! vain!
Eternal bane!
That free Love with bondage bound.

EARTH'S Answer.

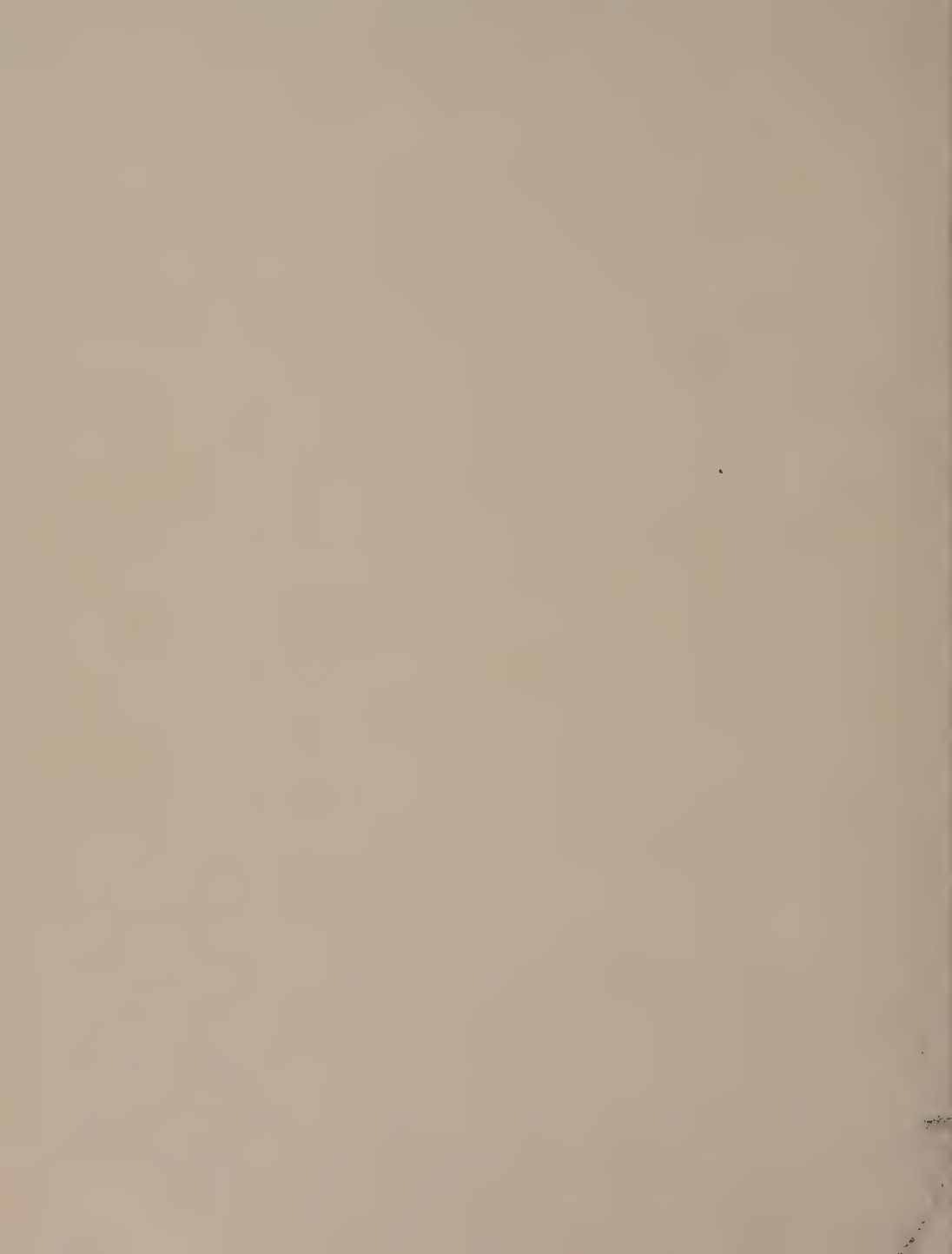
Earth raised up her head,
From the darkness's dread & doom.
Her light fled:
Stony dread!
And her locks covered with grey despair.

Prisoned in water's shroud
Sorrow's soulless does heap my den
Cold and hush
Weeping o'er
I hear the father of the ancient men

Selfish father of men
Cruel jealous selfish fear
Can delight
Chained in night
The virgins of youth and morning bear.

Does spring hide its joy
When buds and blossoms grow?
Does the sower
Sow by night?
Or the plowman in darkness plow?

Break thy heavy chain
That does freeze my bones around
Selfish, vain!
Eternal bone!
That ties Love with bondage bound.



EARTH'S ANSWER

EARTH's answer is tragic and enigmatical. The task is too hard, and she can only lament the senseless cruelty of chains she cannot break. To understand her plaint we must realise that she is bound by some *thought* which we shall find to be theological. Like the Bard, she appeals to antiquity, but whereas his appeal was to the Word, hers is to the Father; his filling with hope, hers with despair.

For Blake there were two visions of God. One was the evil dream of man inventing an invisible Father to account for the creation of this material universe (itself an illusion), and the other was a Spirit—intensely visible in everything that lived when seen as holy and spiritual.

The priests of the former were jealous of all creative acts, whether of the poet or of man and maid. Their cold and cruel attitude towards Art and Sex betrayed their fear of the eternal challenge these make to a conception of a World bound by laws of Time and Matter. By banishing love to the secrecy of night and starlight and the bondage of law and religion, they prison it in the watery shore of the flesh, and hold in chains of ice the open love of virgin hearts in man and maid that should be like the dawn.

These two poems thus interpreted give us the clue to very much of Blake's thought. At the end of his life he pictures Job in his first prosperity worshipping unawares the God of this World as "Our Father which art in heaven"¹ and passing through untold tribulation until he discovers the Divine Being in life itself, in

¹ For Blake's ideas concerning the Lord's Prayer, consult Dr Clarke's "William Blake on the Lord's Prayer" (Hermes Press), a book which in spite of its unfortunate and quite unnecessary anti-Semitism, is a forcible and lucid statement of a fundamental feature of Blake's mind.

brotherly love and forgiveness, in brotherly interdependence, in the creation of verse and sculpture and song, and in the holy joys of wife and home: all spiritual realities: all here and now.

It is a remarkable, but I think unquestionable fact, that Blake originally wrote this poem as an answer to two little verses claiming liberty for love.¹ But the answer was like a great rock loosened by a pebble, and the profound ideas which it stirred in Blake's mind required a companion poem that asked questions equally profound.

¹ *Vide infra*, Part III. pp. 235 f.

I

SONGS OF THE HEART'S EXPERIENCE

LOVE AND DISILLUSION

MY PRETTY ROSE TREE.

AH! SUN-FLOWER.

THE LILLY.

THE GARDEN OF LOVE.

A POISON TREE.

NURSE'S SONG.

THE SICK ROSE.

THE ANGEL.

A LITTLE GIRL LOST.

MY PRETTY ROSE TREE

AH! SUN-FLOWER

THE LILLY

THIS is one of Blake's most interesting pages, both because of the ordered beauty of the four little verses and on account of their history, which covers the whole period of Blake's activity upon the "Songs of Experience," from their spiritual genesis to the end of their engraving on the final plates.

It is probably no accident that the colours associated with the three flowers are red, yellow, and white, representing earthly love, poetic love, and their union in Human love. That the second should be associated with the Sun is of even greater interest. In his

prophetic books the mythical figure of Los, symbol of poetic labour, is closely associated with the Sun, and it is not impossible that the germ of that great symbol is to be found in this little verse. Another and possibly greater point of interest is that the three poems, as intimated in their titles, are in the first, the second, and the third persons, all three modes being common in Blake's songs, and all three very clearly associated in the "Piper" with stages of poetic or spiritual achievement. Innocence is frankly and sweetly egotistic. Vision (like prayer) is intercourse or communion with the Spirit, and is, therefore, in the second person. Experience is the passage towards completed Art, in which the Ego has done its work. The voice of Art becomes finally independent of the ego that fathered it, for it still speaks when the author sleeps in Time or in Eternity. Perhaps this is connected with Blake's remark, "A Poet, a Painter, a Musician, an Architect: the Man Or Woman who is not one of these is not a Christian."¹

But even this does not exhaust the interest in the form of this tiny trilogy.

Blake was already profoundly interested in Dante,² though his illustrations of the Comedy belong to the last months of his life. It can hardly be an accident, therefore, that this diminutive jewel of gold and enamel reproduces what may be called the ground-plan of the comedy. "My Pretty Rose Tree" represents transgression and pain. "Ah! Sun-flower" represents holy and purifying aspiration; and "The Lilly" represents beatitude: Inferno, Purgatorio and Paradiso.

Turning now to the poems themselves: "My Pretty Rose Tree" representing the woes of earthly love, shows how virtue itself is

¹ Laocoön.

² Cf. "Any man of mechanical talents may from the writings of Paracelsus or Jacob Behmen, produce ten thousand volumes of equal value with Swedenborg's, and from those of Dante or Shakespear, an infinite number."—"The Marriage," p. 22.

My Pretty ROSE TREE

A flower was offerd to me:
Such a flower as May never bore.
But I said I've a Pretty Rose-tree,
And I passed the sweet flower o'er.

Then I went to my Pretty Rose-tree:
To tend her by day and by night.
But my Rose turnd away with jealousy:
And her thorns were my only delight.

AH! SUN-FLOWER

Ah Sun-flower! weary of time,
Who countest the steps of the Sun:
Seeking after that sweet golden clime,
Where the travellers journey is done.

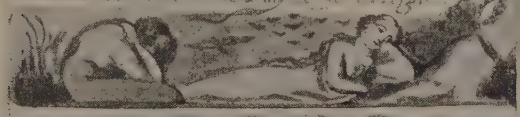
Where the Youth pined away with desire,
And the pale Virgin shrouded in snow:
Arise from their graves and aspire,
Where my Sun-flower wishes to go.

THE LILLY

The modest Rose puts forth a thorn:
The humble Sheep, a threatning horn:
While the Lilly white, shall in Love delight
Nor a thorn nor a threat stain her beauty bright.

My Pretty ROSE TREE

A flower was offered to me,
 Said a flower the Rose-tree said
 But I said, No a Rose-tree
 But I passed the sweet Rose-tree
 Now I want to see a Rose-tree
 To send her to my by night.
 But you have turned away with pale eyes
 And her thorns were my sole delight



AH! SUN-FLOWER

A Sun-flower, weary of time,
 Who counts the steps of the Sun;
 When he has turned his golden time
 And the long flow journey is done.
 When the North wind comes with desire
 And the cold Virgin shrouds in snow,
 When the sun is gone and the snow
 When the sun is gone and the snow

THE LILY

The modest Lily grows in the shade
 The humble Sheep...
 The modest Lily grows in the shade
 The humble Sheep...

rewarded only by suspicion and unkindness. "Ah! Sun-flower" is the yearning for a love-experience beyond the vicissitudes of Time: the vision of a realm where we are lifted above Love's pains and where Love shines in eternal brilliance: where youth having reached its goal, no longer pines with desire or freezes in celibacy. Thus we return to earth with new eyes to find it can be transfigured, and the "Lilly" shows us a Love calmed and uplifted by vision. For without the thorns of passion (the rose) and the dangerousness of innocence's egoism (the sheep's horn) love becomes a spiritual thing even on earth.

I feel sure that the last line of the first poem (which suggests a haunting melodic cadence) is something more than bitterness and irony. Is there not a kind of painful delight in the love that ever needs winning, and whose favours do not float unceasingly into our half listless hands? It was for this reason, I imagine, that in his manuscript book, when he wants to describe the weariness of matrimonial bonds such as preclude venture or hazard, Blake changes the tree from a rose to a mirtle:

Blossoms showring all around
O how sick & weary I
Underneath my mirtle lie.

The rose tree is different and her thorns are akin to those "salutary and medicinal" corrosives of Hell's "Printing house" that are to expunge "the notion that man has a body distinct from his soul."¹

Blake's use of flowers to represent sex love and sex favours so obviously followed from his use of the vegetable life as symbolic of the 'instinctive' life of man, that he probably did not suppose himself to be very obscure, and I imagine the symbolism of the Rose-tree is clear to most readers.²

¹ "The Marriage," p. 14.

² *Cp. supra*, "Infant Joy," p. 122 and note.

THE GARDEN OF LOVE

THIS poem is a characteristic and forcible statement of Blake's theme that "Love" cannot be sanctified by "Religion." The negative law, "Thou shalt not," can never enshrine the most positive thing in life. But there is, I feel sure, a personal element in the story.

In the "Poetical Sketches" he tells of his lyrical days of early love:

So when she speaks, the voice of Heaven I hear;
So when we walk, nothing impure comes near; ·
Each field seems Eden, and each calm retreat;
Each village seems the haunt of holy feet.

He now wakes with a shock to realise a world where sex is conceived as something to be confined behind gloomy and massive ideas; to be sanctioned only by jealous and mournful guardians; or to be actually immolated in tombs. All this is to turn Paradise into a Graveyard, fenced and tangled up with penalties and pains.

The GARDEN of LOVE.

I went to the Garden of Love,
And saw what I never had seen:
A Chapel was built in the midst,
Where I used to play on the green.

And the gates of this Chapel were shut,
And Thou shalt not, writ over the door;
So I turn'd to the Garden of Love,
That so many sweet flowers bore,

And I saw it was filled with graves,
And tomb-stones where flowers should be:
And Priests in black gowns, were walking their rounds,
And binding with briars, my joys & desires.



The GARDEN of LOVE.

I went to the Garden of Love.
 And saw what I never had seen;
 A Chapel was built in the midst,
 Where I used to play on the green.
 And the gates of this Chapel were shut,
 And Thou shalt not, writ over the door;
 So I turned to the Garden of Love,
 That so many sweet flowers bore.
 And I saw it was filled with graves,
 And tomb-stones where flowers should be;
 And Priests in black gowns, were walking their
 rounds,
 And binding with briars my joys & desires.

A POISON TREE.

I was angry with my friend:
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe:
I told it not, my wrath did grow.

And I waterd it in fears,
Night & morning with my tears:
And I sunned it with smiles,
And with soft deceitful wiles.

And it grew both day and night,
Till it bore an apple bright.
And my foe beheld it shine,
And he knew that it was mine.

And into my garden stole,
When the night had veild the pole;
In the morning glad I see,
My foe outstretchd beneath the tree.

A POISON TREE.

I was angry with my friend ;
 I told my wrath, my wrath did end .
 I was angry with my foe ;
 I told it not, my wrath did grow .

And I waterd it in fears,
 Night & morning with my tears ;
 And I sunned it with smiles,
 And with soft deceitful wiles .

And it grew both day and night,
 Till it bore an apple bright,
 And my foe beheld it shine,
 And he knew that it was mine .

And into my garden stole,
 When the night had veild the pole ;
 In the morning glad I see,
 My foe outstretch'd beneath the tree .



A POISON TREE

THIS poem is about another kind of garden and treats of the "error" of repression in another aspect. It is not necessarily connected in any way with sex love or hate. Its original title was the ironical one of "Christian forbearance," and Blake set out to show that contrary to Christian ethic it was really an act of friendship to express anger, and an act of enmity to curb it. But he becomes so much interested in the growth of wrath that he pursues that theme without any further attempt at contrast. The poem thus becomes a masterly picture of the mind of a man absorbed by hate.

Anger which is not outspoken becomes a deeply-cherished desire to injure, cloaked in outward friendliness. At last this outward friendliness, becoming too tempting, is presumed upon by the enemy; but the 'kindness' he grasps is full of secret venom that makes it prove a fatal injury.

We know that Blake's fellow-artists were often tempted to steal his designs,¹ and suppressed wrath might easily beget in Blake's mind a characteristic invention, which, effectively as he himself would handle it, might be disastrous to a weaker man. But I am not myself inclined to regard this poem as in any sense strict history, though Blake must at some time have experienced the emotions he expresses. For whatever else the poem may be it is a grimly convincing picture of the zest with which a man possessed with hate watches an enemy over-reach himself. At one important point Blake changed the story by deleting a line in which he said he *gave* the apple to his enemy. He now makes his enemy steal it. This is a tremendous addition to the power and effectiveness of the picture. The enemy becomes the

¹ Cf. Fuseli's well-known jest, that Blake was "d——d good to steal from."

only outward and ostensible criminal, and the delight of the inward murderer is sweetened by the fact that he has not been obliged to declare himself. The sting of the poem is in the word "glad," which an examination of the MS. proves to be the only word written with one of Blake's emphatic capitals:

In the morning Glad I see
My foe outstretchd beneath the tree.

The illustration is as grim as the poem.

NURSES Song

When the voices of children, are heard on the green,
And whisprings are in the dale:
The days of my youth rise fresh in my mind,
My face turns green and pale.

Then come home my children, the sun is gone down
And the dews of night arise
Your spring & your day, are wasted in play
And your winter and night in disguise.

NURSES SONG

When the voices of children are heard
And the voices of mothers are near
The days of youth are so sweet
My heart is young again

When the voices of children are heard
And the voices of mothers are near
The days of youth are so sweet
My heart is young again



NURSE'S SONG

THIS poem, too, speaks of the poison generated by secrecy and repression. In the MS. it comes immediately after "The Lilly," and is followed by only one short poem before "The Tyger." Although it closely imitates a Song of "Innocence" in a way that none of the other poems do, it is totally distinct in meaning and atmosphere (as the very different illustrations testify), so that it does not actually contradict or neutralise the other. It is in truth a bitter little song, though not without its higher incentive. The hill becomes a dale where "whisp'rings" may be more secret, for the "play" of children is by no means always innocent. These recall in the Nurse's mind memories of youth, whose promise has turned to bitterness.

The second verse is a clear instance of Blake's earlier images becoming metaphors in his mind. The dews of night which were originally in the sweet natural world are now symbols of approaching adolescence, and the theme is the tragedy of an innocence that leads to nothing, and finally disappears in the cold winter of deceit and the dark night of hidden desire.

The illustration shows a boy at the beginning, and a girl at the end, of their teens, in bitter spiritual conflict. The boy is burning with secret resolutions in defiance of her authority, and the girl is filled with distrust. The grapes symbolise the pleasures,¹ and a younger girl sits demurely behind the boy.

It was in reaction and revolt against this vision of secret desire

¹ Cf. MS. No. xiii, p. 230 :

" And I saw before me shine
Clusters of the wandring vine
And many a lovely flower & tree
Stretchd their blossoms out to me."

poisoned by repression that Blake in the MS. broke out into a song of light and day:

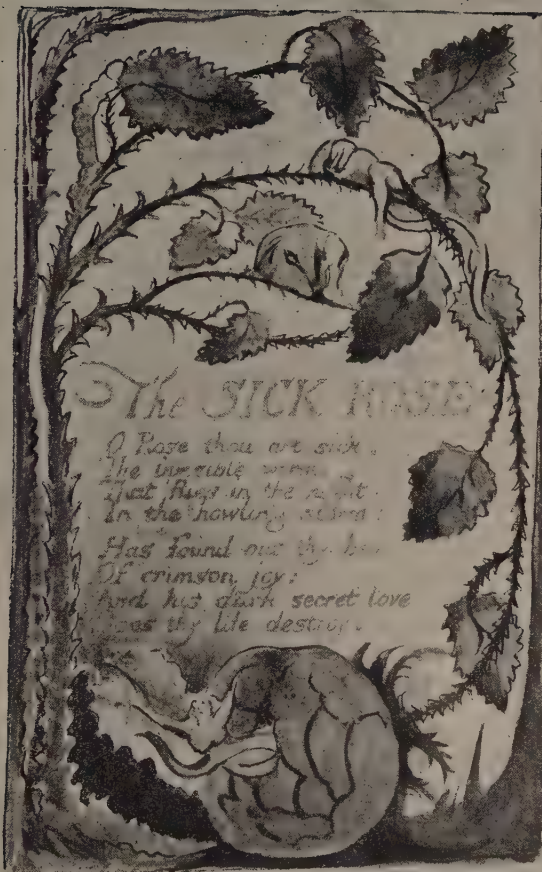
Are not the joys of morning sweeter
Than the joys of night.

And after that he wrote the story of Light flashing through Darkness,
“The Tyger ” fiercely burning in the forests of the night.

The SICK ROSE

O Rose thou art sick,
The invisible worm,
That flies in the night
In the howling storm:

Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy:
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy.



The SICK ROSE

O Rose thou art sick,
The invisible worm,
That flies in the night,
In the howling storm:
Has found out thy bed,
Of crimson joy;
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy.

THE SICK ROSE

THIS poem represents earthly love in its sickness. The "worm that flies in the night in the howling storm" is the dark *thought* that flies (perhaps with bat-wings like Satan)¹ in the storm of lust-passion—how different from the birds in the Blossom. The illustration is difficult to read and is much less clear in some copies than in others. But there is more to be read in it than in most. The rose itself is the flaming heart of bodily love from which the delicate spirit of joy is escaping in agony. The worm, as originally intended, is not easily detected in the caterpillar in the left-hand top corner of the design, where it sometimes looks almost like the stalk of a leaf. On a thorny spray above the poem are two figures sometimes painted in rose tints. The lower one is a weeping woman, the other a man with head buried in his arms and his leg thrown over the thorny stem from which streams a petal-like robe. It is all representative of the tragic and thorny character of earthly love, as bound and thwarted by "the Priest." In several later copies a worm is introduced entering the heart of the rose whence joy is escaping, and sometimes appearing to bind her round. This makes the poem closely parallel to the MS. poem, "I saw a Chapel all of Gold."²

¹ *Vide* phallic illustration in the "Four Zoas" MS.

² *Vide infra*, Part III, p. 222.

THE ANGEL

THIS is one of the last "Songs of Experience" found in the MS. It is a kind of summary of the tragedy of earthly love, and like "The Clod & the Pebble" (which is one of the earliest of the MS. entries) it analyses love into the soft love and the hard. But whereas "The Clod & the Pebble" is terse and epigrammatic, this is narrative, emotional and dramatic. It is a dream in which the Poet believes himself a woman,¹ and he wakes to inquire the meaning.

The mood at first is that of the petted child always being made a queen of, always persuaded that her sorrows are divinely watched, and that it is almost a duty to provide Providence with innocent woe to comfort. It is the mood of the "Cradle Song" of "Innocence," carried on after the child has ceased to be in the cradle:

Sweet sleep, Angel mild,
Hover o'er my happy child . . .
Sleep sleep, happy sleep,
While o'er thee thy mother weep.

So sang the mother in "Innocence," and the child grows up to sing:

. . . I was a maiden Queen
Guarded by an Angel mild
Witless woe was neer beguil'd! . . .
And I wept both night and day
And he wip'd my tears away. . . .

The next mood represents the attempt to keep and hold love by the appeal to pity. For when love has never been known to us except

¹ I think this would be less surprising to Blake than to some men. Cp. "Man in the Resurrection changes his Sexual Garments at Will."—"Jerusalem," 61⁵¹.

The Angel

I Dreamt a Dream! what can it mean?
And that I was a maiden Queen:
Guarded by an Angel mild:
Witless woe, was neer beguil'd!

And I wept both night and day
And he wip'd my tears away
And I wept both day and night
And hid from him my hearts delight

So he took his wings and fled:
Then the morn blush'd rosy red:
I dried my tears & armd my fears,
With ten thousand shields and spears

Soon my Angel came again:
I was arm'd, he came in vain:
For the time of youth was fled
And grey hairs were on my head



The Angel

I Dreamt a Dream, what can it mean,
And that I was a maiden Queen:
Guarded by an Angel mild;
Whitely's woe, was near beguiled!
And I wept both night and day
And he wip'd my tears away
And I wept both day and night
And hid from him my heart's delight
So he took his wings and fled;
Then, the morn blush'd rosy red:
I dried my tears & arm'd my fears,
With ten thousand shields and spears
Soon my Angel came again;
I was arm'd, he came in vain:
For the time of youth was fled
And grey hairs were on my head.

as the cherisher and comforter of sadness, we try to keep it by always requiring comfort, and are at pains not to reveal how dearly we hug it:

And I wept both day and night
And hid from him my hearts delight.

But love cannot live for ever with no return but tears, and love at last flies. The weeper now wakes with a start and a sense of injury. Love and comfort seemed hers by right, and it was an understood thing that if she wept enough there was always to be a little cherub to console her.

A new mood supervenes. The soft Clod-love has been suddenly superseded by the fierce Pebble-love,¹ and when the "Angel" comes again it finds something equally unreal. Tears have given way to anger, and the sweetness and strength of honest love have had no chance. And so the moment goes for ever.

¹ *Vide supra*, Preface, p. 37, and *infra*, p. 171.

A LITTLE GIRL LOST

THIS is one of Blake's most important poems. It was the last of the 'Lost Children' series, and in a sense an afterthought, composed when he had already transferred "*The Little Girl Lost*" and "Found" from "Innocence" to "Experience." Its thesis is the innocence of bodily love, but it belongs to the same stratum as "Ah! Sun-flower," which dwells upon visionary or poetic love, and "To Tirzah," which disparages sex altogether.

"To Tirzah" may be regarded as the *finding* Song to both "A Little BOY" and "A Little GIRL Lost," which were otherwise unredeemed tragedy.

"A Little GIRL Lost" has, perhaps more than any of the other Songs, caused uneasiness both to Blake's contemporary and modern admirers. Coleridge¹ would have wished it omitted, "not for the want of innocence in the poem, but from the too probable want of it in many readers."

The feeling that it is dangerous or subversive is partly due to the word "little" in the title; partly to the fact that the prelude is addressed to "children," and that the "maiden" is still clearly under parental guardianship. All this is slightly misleading. Blake no doubt, like Shakespeare, believed in very young brides; but whereas the boy and the girl in the "Nurse's Song" of "Experience," and the little lost *boys*, both in "Innocence" and in "Experience," are clearly children, the illustration shows Lyca (*The Little Girl*) and her lover (p. 116, *supra*) as fully mature. The "youth and maiden" of this poem are not actually shown in the illustration, but the poem itself suggests that they are more than children, and the girl's spiritual

¹ I quote from Miss Mona Wilson's "Life" (Nonesuch, 1927), p. 278.

dependence on her father is, I am sure, at least partly representative. The father, in fact, stands for much beside himself. He represents the Law and even the God of the Law, and I very much doubt whether Blake would have considered that even Catherine Blake, who was at this time over thirty, was free from that spiritual tutelage.

Moreover, one always has to remember that in "Experience" Blake is no longer actually writing of, or for, children, as he was in "Innocence." There, it was sometimes a fact: here, it is always more or less a fiction. He is now—whatever his particular theme—really concerned to show the "Two Contrary States of the Human Soul," though he may use children to show these. The MS. of "Experience" is mainly concerned with problems of maturity, and it was partly in order to observe his convention that he puts this particular poem into the form of a lost child poem. It is really his version of the Garden of Eden and the Fall—the Fall being due to the entrance of "the Law."¹

Although there are only two or three lines that are the least cryptic, it is by no means a simple matter of exposition to explain all the poem means and implies. Indeed, when it is completely interpreted, together with the other poems to which it is related, there is not much left to explain about the two contrary states of the human soul. There are quite half a dozen of the other poems of "Experience" with which it is vitally related and which must be at least partly understood before it can be interpreted. It is also closely connected with more than one poem in the MS., and has important bearings on much of Blake's later work.

The first thing to notice about it is that notwithstanding the

¹ I conceive this poem and "A Little BOY Lost" to be closely associated with Blake's actual friends. I shall explain the latter poem's probable connection with Tom Paine. This, I suggest, he associated in the same sort of way with Mary Wollstonecraft and with "Visions of the Daughters of Albion."

exquisite lyrical mood of the first part, it is a tragedy. In this aspect it is closely related with "A Little BOY Lost," and the two are generally associated in "Experience." The basic theme of "A Little BOY Lost" is this: A child sets out to think for himself, and in so doing goes through the stage of adherence to "Reason." This is a right and necessary stage which all independent thought must go through; and though there is something beyond it, no mind that has not had its adventure in rationalism can ever get beyond. Unhappily, this is a country where the adventure is not tolerated, with the consequence that the soul of youth is systematically murdered, and innocence destroyed. Substitute "Love" for "Thought," and you have the basic theme of "A Little GIRL Lost," where Blake insists that youth *must* be allowed to find in the body a Paradise that perishes, as the body itself perishes, if it is ever to know the imperishable Paradise of the Spirit.

The poem is intensely dramatic in form and character. We have first the Prologue or Chorus telling us the meaning (in point of fact only half the meaning) of the Song. Then the curtain lifts on a scene of idyllic beauty transporting us to an ancient world that is no more. In the next scene the story begins. It is a story of this bygone age, continuing through three scenes representative of Dawn, Day, and Night, all exquisitely beautiful and told with deep and delicate sympathy. So ends the first act. Let us next examine Blake's illustration, which will serve as a curtain between the acts, for its purpose is to veil rather than to reveal.

In the illustrations to the story of Lyca (*The Little Girl*) Blake gave rein to his poetic vision in the portrayal of young love; of innocence unprotected in the passion-haunted forest; and of a paradise where nakedness and sunshine and the passions as the grand protectors of innocence were all discovered in idyllic harmony. But here Blake shows his restraint by a picture in which the actors them-

selves do not appear. We see nothing but the tree and the grass and the birds: all natural and symbolical, but a veil rather than a delineation of the story.¹ He does not invite even his reader to pry upon the sacred moment of love:

Strangers came not near:
And the maiden soon forgot her fear.

The first act is nothing but an ideal picture of the "Age of Gold" when youth and maiden came together in Innocence without asking the sanction of a society that was as yet unconscious of guilt or tragedy. Indeed, were it not for the Prologue, we should not suspect that we had anything more before us than a picture recalling Paradise before the Fall.

The second act shows us the wreck of Innocence, not by something intrinsic in the nature of Experience, but in the time-process itself when we lose Eternity. This requires further explanation.

Blake had by this time worked out his theme, in "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," that the works of inspiration are always being annexed by orthodoxy which hardens itself against every new incursion of the spirit. So Ona, at first confident of her father's sympathy, finds a blank negativeness in his love, that anticipates the Book of the Law, and she is shattered to find that her discovery of Paradise is for him nothing but a terrible desecration of white and sacred memories. The father is drawn with scarcely less sympathy than the daughter.

¹ There is a strange squirrel in the tree, no doubt symbolising the vigour and freedom of youthful joy, and a still stranger old man resting his hand upon a branch. In some copies it looks almost as though it represented the "black bow":

"When Satan first the black bow bent
And the Moral Law from the Gospel rent."—"Jerusalem," p. 52.

Let us now paraphrase and explain. The prelude needs no explanation:

Children of the future Age,
Reading this indignant page;
Know that in a former time,
Love! sweet Love! was thought a crime.

In the Age of Gold,
Free from winter's cold:
Youth and maiden bright,
To the holy light,
Naked in the sunny beams
delight.

In the Age of Innocence the holiest of things,
youth, sunshine and nakedness were not
divorced by the winter of Nature or man's
chill restricting mind.

Once a youthful pair
Fill'd with softest care;
Met in garden bright,
Where the holy light,
Had just remov'd the curtains
of the night.

Once a youth and maiden filled with the
gentleness of passion met amidst their love
flowers at the holy moment when growth
unveils its meaning.

There in rising day,
On the grass they play;
Parents were afar;
Strangers came not near:
And the maiden soon forgot her
fear.

In such hours, passion rises ever more glorious
like the day, while Mother Earth spreads
the green bed of Nature for mutual joy.
All thought of the overshadowing elder or
the busy outsider disappears before perfect
love that casts out fear.

Tired with kisses sweet
They agree to meet,
When the silent sleep
Waves o'er heavens deep:
And the weary tired wanderers
weep.

But passion cloy unless it moves unstayed to
its fulfilment, and as the day wears, their
minds assent to that union in which peace
rolls over deep heavens of emotion, and the
weary quest of humanity's divided sex is
resolved in excess of joy.

To her father white
 Came the maiden bright:
 But his loving look,
 Like the holy book,
 All her tender limbs with terror
 shook.

To her father, who has reached the age of
 passionless affection, comes the maiden in
 her beauty, only to find that his love makes
 laws "that forbid the springs of life"—his
 look is a Bible, before Bibles were, with their
 false distinction between body and soul
 (*vide* "The Marriage"); and her fair body is
 shaken with dismay and terror.

Ona! pale and weak!
 To thy father speak:
 O the trembling fear!
 O the dismal care!
 That shakes the blossoms of my
 hoary hair.

Conscious of her lonely helplessness she cannot
 plead with her father and stands dumbled by
 fear before something she cannot under-
 stand; while he, anxious for the future, is
 broken-hearted at an act of his own child's
 which seems to desecrate his past, with its
 holy memories of loves long cold and white.

Before we examine the interesting place of this poem among the other Songs, and how they supplement and explain it, we will attempt to understand the personal name. "Ona" is, I believe, a half-anglicised form of Una: it is "One" with a feminine termination; that is to say, it is "A" and "GIRL."¹ At all events this suggestion will form a good basis for our next observations. This name thus interpreted emphasises in the first place her utter loneliness. She has followed the light of inspiration; it has led her to heavens of beatitude, only to shatter her with the discovery that on her return home she has become a thing of reproach and dismay. From the bosom of summer she has suddenly waked to find herself nothing but a pale, weak, lone girl in a wintry world.

But Blake means something more by her loneliness. With all its beauty this early love has its selfish aspect. It is one of man's attempts

¹ The "Book of Los" begins with "Eno aged Mother," which I suggest may be a reversal of O, N, E, the primal unity from which creation rose.

.. to Create a Heaven in which all shall be pure & holy
In their Own Selfhoods.—“Jerusalem,” 49²⁷⁻²⁸.

It is a necessary stage, but only a stage in Time, and not yet the discovery of the Eternal.

We may now turn to the very interesting story of how this great diminutive drama took its place among the “Songs.” The first issue of the complete book of “Songs of Innocence and of Experience” was one made by Blake for his friend, Thomas Butts. It has many points of peculiar interest. “Infant Joy” and “The Blossom” face one another at the beginning of “Innocence.”¹

The “Laughing Song” comes in both parts, indicating that laughter is a necessary part of both states. And as “Innocence” opens almost at the beginning with “Infant Joy,” so “Experience” at one stage, perhaps, concluded with “Infant Sorrow,” illustrating the theme of the “Proverb” now engraved in “The Marriage,” “Joys impregnate. Sorrows bring forth.” Blake had perhaps actually engraved and printed the book when a new idea came to him, and he wrote three new songs (the only ones besides the “Introduction” which do not occur in the MS.), and engraved them for his finale, together with three of the MS. songs. It is the order and character of these “Songs” which is so interesting:

	Infant Sorrow	<i>recto.</i>
(<i>Not in MS.</i>)	A Little GIRL Lost	<i>verso.</i>
	Holy Thursday	<i>recto.</i>
	My Pretty Rose Tree	} <i>verso.</i>
(<i>Not in MS.</i>)	Ah! Sun-flower	
	The Lilly	
(<i>Not in MS.</i>)	To Tirzah	<i>recto.</i>

[*Verso* blank.—“The Clod & the Pebble” added later and not by Blake.]

¹ “The Shepherd” comes first, so as to bring “Infant Joy” on to the *verso* opposite “The Blossom” on the *recto*.

Thus, after "Infant Sorrow," which is the tragedy of birth, we turn over the page to find this story of a youth and maid rushing joyously into a parenthood which is to repeat the tragedy. I feel sure this is no accident. It is part of Blake's indictment against Nature in the Time-process, that its very joy is part of an ever-repeated and inevitable circle of sorrow. But the conventional objection, that youthful propagation will fill the world too full, is fiercely answered in the next song, "Holy Thursday," which Blake now engraved from the MS.; for "Holy Thursday" definitely implies, amongst other things, that there can never be too many babes in a land where the sun shines and the rain falls.

Then comes the trilogy (already explained) with its new poem, "Ah! Sun-flower," introducing the theme of a love independent of the Time-process. This leads up to the theme of "To Tirzah," which is that the soul of man is unconcerned with the tragedy of birth and the selfishness of both mother-love and sex-love, as confined in the Time-process; for the cosmic act of self-sacrifice, "the death of Jesus," liberates the soul and raises the body itself to spiritual life. When we remember that the death of Jesus is associated with the theme of "brotherhood,"¹ or what we may call the Social motive, we begin to understand the position it took in Blake's prophetic poetry.

But we have not yet exhausted the interest of this poem. Mr Keynes has discovered that in this Butts copy, "The Clod & the Pebble" is not contained. It was added for completeness at some time by one of its owners, but Blake did not include it. I do not doubt that he rejected it because he had already carried its theme (as we shall see) much further in "The Marriage." It may or may not have been engraved, but the two poems, "A Little GIRL Lost" and

¹ " . . . every kindness to another is a little Death In the Divine Image nor can Man exist but by Brotherhood."—"Jerusalem," 96²⁷⁻²⁸.

"To Tirzah," in a sense take its place, dealing as they do with contrasted aspects of Love, not to be understood apart.

I think it was not until Blake had "let go" his prophetic indignation against the idea that it is our business to interfere with the Love adventure of Youth, that he felt able to say what he had to say about its necessary incompleteness.

NOTE ON BLAKE'S THEORIES OF LOVE AND MARRIAGE

Any who wish to do so may at this point return for a moment to the scruple which Coleridge voiced, and which many others have felt, concerning a poem that appears to champion immature and illegitimate propagation.

It is necessary in the first place to point out that Blake deliberately sets the stage "In the Age of Gold." Like the story of Eden itself it is not to be regarded as an immediately practical proposal, but as a picture representing an ideal of innocence. But at the same time it is true that Blake would never have admitted that propagation *could* be illegitimate, or that Law, the nature of which is to make crimes, could possibly sanctify Love, whose nature it is to create life. With regard to immaturity, I think, as I have said, that the poem is partly misleading. But it has also to be considered that Blake himself was probably singularly without personal experience of a form of sex invasion that carries the adolescent back to merely animal emotional conditions, and which in our present stage (whatever survival value it may have had when the preservation of the race required early propagation) certainly leads to retrogression when barren of romantic or spiritual passion. He had intensely strong passions, some good and some bad, but all on the psychic rather than the animal plane. What he calls "the torments of love and jealousy" were fierce and personal, but not carnal or sensual. And in his happier

mood, love had from boyhood been that high romantic thing which wakes the adolescent to worship of the ideal in woman and in life, while it was for him alive with that beautiful touch of Earth for ever characteristic of his art. Listen to him in these lines from the "Poetical Sketches" written in his teens:

My feet are wing'd, while o'er the dewy lawn,
I meet my maiden risen like the morn:
O bless those holy feet, like angels' feet;
O bless those limbs, beaming with heav'nly light!

So when she speaks, the voice of Heaven I hear;
So when we walk, nothing impure comes near;
Each field seems Eden, and each calm retreat;
Each village seems the haunt of holy feet.

Yet what could be more passionate than the sequel in the poem that followed:

Oft when the summer sleeps among the trees,
Whisp'ring faint murmurs to the scanty breeze,
I walk the village round; if at her side
A youth doth walk in stolen joy and pride,
I curse my stars in bitter grief and woe,
That made my love so high, and me so low.
O should she e'er prove false, his limbs I'd tear,
And throw all pity on the burning air;
I'd curse bright fortune for my mixed lot
And then I'd die in peace, and be forgot.

But if Blake was incapable of the merely sensual aspects of carnal passion, and had no use whatever for any kind of bond in love, it is the more remarkable that he came clearly to the conviction that the union of man and woman is only perfected in God. Many things lead us to this view of his maturer thought; but there is a design

called "The Angel of the Divine Presence clothing Adam and Eve with coats of Skins" (1803), which seems to me to say explicitly what is implied everywhere in the later work concerning the union of male and female. Adam and Eve approach the Divine Being from either side with advanced right feet entering the folds of his garments, while he with mighty left foot between them, and covering them with his arms seems to robe them with solemn benison. Divine Beings descending to Earth are invariably shown with bared left foot in Blake's designs. For the Divine does actually become earthly and human. On either side flaming altars stand before soaring and over-arching vegetation. Thus we see the union of man and woman clothed by a higher intervening presence, their flaming wills soaring upwards before the over-arching foliage representing an intertwining bodily unity. It is in the descent of the Holy Spirit to earth that male and female may find their ascent to heaven.¹

But Blake's pamphlet in this poem still has force. If love is only blessed when it has found a social or spiritual sanction, this fact surely puts a terrible responsibility upon "Society" to find a means to sanction its legitimate consummation before "the time of youth is fled."

¹ The development of Blake's attitude towards marriage is further treated, *infra*, Part III, p. 215 *et seq.*

A Little GIRL Lost

Children of the future Age,
Reading this indignant page;
Know that in a former time,
Love! sweet Love! was thought a crime.

In the Age of Gold,
Free from winters cold:
Youth and maiden bright,
To the holy light,
Naked in the sunny beams delight.

Once a youthful pair
Fill'd with softest care :
Met in garden bright,
Where the holy light,
Had just removd the curtains of the night.

There in rising day,
On the grass they play:
Parents were afar:
Strangers came not near:
And the maiden soon forgot her fear.

Tired with kisses sweet
They agree to meet,
When the silent sleep
Waves o'er heavens deep;
And the weary tired wanderers weep.

To her father white
Came the maiden bright:
But his loving look,
Like the holy book,
All her tender limbs with terror shook.

Ona! pale and weak!
To thy father speak:
O the trembling fear!
O the dismal care!
That shakes the blossoms of my hoary hair.

A Little GIRL Lost

Children of the future Age
Reading this indignant page
Know that in a former time
Love! sweet Love! was thought a crime.

In the Age of Gold
Free from winters cold
Youth and maiden bright
To the holy light
Naked in the sunny beams delight

Once a youthful pair
Fild with truest care
Met in garden bright
Where the holy light
Had just removed the curtains of the night

There in rising day
On the grass they play
Parents were near
Strangers came not near
And the maiden soon forgot her fear

Tired with kisses sweet
They agree to meet
When the silent sleep
Waves o'er heavens deep
And the weary tired wanderers weep

To her father while
Came the maiden bright
But his living look
Like the holy book
All her tender limbs with terror shook

O pale and weak
To thy father speak
O the trembling fear
O the dismal care
That shakes the blazons of my hoary

II

SONGS OF THE MIND'S EXPERIENCE

THOUGHT AND DISILLUSION

THE CLOD AND THE PEBBLE

INFANT SORROW

THE HUMAN ABSTRACT

A LITTLE BOY LOST

THE LITTLE VAGABOND

THE FLY

TO TIRZAH

THE eight poems here grouped together are selected, like the previous group, on account of a certain community of theme. But their order is that of their composition and shows an interesting progression of thought. Love and life are still the theme, but they are love and life deeply considered and often tragically conceived, never merely instinctive. For this reason they are classed here as poems of thought and disillusion.

THE CLOD AND THE PEBBLE

THIS important little poem was the third in the MS. book and sets forth with terse symbolism and epigram the "contrary states of the human soul" which Blake was about to call "Innocence" and "Experience." It is challenging and dramatic rather than didactic.

He describes first what Love seems to us in innocence, the innocence of the earth, of the grass, of the child. How lovely it all

looks, the love of the mother, the love of the ewe, and the love of the shepherd—the love of God. Surely it is this alone that can make a heaven of our earthly lot, which without it were desperate indeed.

But cattle sometimes represent for Blake “Experience,”¹ in contradistinction to the sheep of “Innocence”; and when Blake wrote the poem he may have meant to express the idea that actual experience tramples this view of love under foot.

Thought which comes with Experience is as hard as Innocence is soft, and the Pebble of the brook, or stream of material life, sees in the Love, even of innocence, the instinct of pure self-seeking. This view might be expressed by saying that the ewe requires the lamb as much as the lion does. It is all self-seeking in one, or other form. The lover desires his love to satisfy his own fierce need, reckless of her weal or woe.

Blake was in a mood of revolt, and he writes with bitter zest. Love is not merely selfish but deliberately cruel. It is so again in the last poem of the group “To Tirzah”; but there, it is the soft instinct of the mother that is conceived as being full of cruelty and self-deception. Here one feels Blake’s keen enjoyment of the Pebble’s ruthless honesty. In “A Little BOY Lost” it is the child who voices the “rational” and egoistic view of love,² and the cruelty is attributed to his opponents and oppressors. Blake was more than half on the side of the rationalists at this moment.

At all hazards, he seems to be saying, let us get clear of the entanglements of self-deception. If life and love are cruel let us say so and see what next. It may be that some kind of death is the one way to real life and that he who would save his life must lose it. This is his conclusion in all his works, though the “death” takes such different forms as not to be always recognisable.

¹ *Vide* “Blake’s Vision of the Book of Job,” Illustration xxi.

² “I love myself—so does the bird,” as the MS. version once had it.

The CLOD & the PEBBLE

Love seeketh not Itself to please,
Nor for itself hath any care;
But for another gives its ease,
And builds a Heaven in Hells despair.

So sung a little Clod of Clay,
Trodden with the cattles feet;
But a Pebble of the brook,
Warbled out these metres meet.

Love seeketh only Self to please,
To bind another to Its delight:
Joys in anothers loss of ease,
And builds a Hell in Heavens despite.



The CLOD & the PEBBLE

*Love seeketh not itself to please,
Nor for itself hath any cure;
But for another gains its ease
And builds a Heaven on Hell's despair.*

*So runs a little Clod of Clay,
Trodden with the cattle's foot;
But a Pebble of the brook,
Worshipped out there metres meet.*

*Love seeketh only Self to please,
To bind another to its delight;
Joys in another's loss of ease,
And builds a Hell in Heaven's despite.*



Interesting as it is in itself this little poem has an even greater interest as being the germ of Blake's next great book, "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell." The theme of this is that Instinct (which he calls Hell) makes life beautiful, and Reason (which he calls Heaven) when dominant, so completely controls all life as to make it Hell. Strange as it may seem "The Marriage" is, in fact, a restoration of the theme of Innocence. Its theme is that Instinct (Hell) builds a heaven in its own despair, and Reason (Heaven) builds a hell in its own despite. Heaven and Hell are now reversed and the story begins again by the descent from this new heaven of "the comforter, or Desire that Reason may have Ideas to build on." All this happens again and again as inspired religions fall into rational and orthodox systems—for the "Eternal Hell" (instinct or inspiration) periodically "revives" and brings about a new era by means of "an improvement of sensual enjoyment"—in other words, by the building of a heaven in hell's despair.

Blake had developed the theme of this little poem so far beyond its MS. form, before he finally printed the "Songs," that it is no wonder he did not include it in the first issue of the double book, but wrote two much deeper poems on the love of instinct and the love of experience.

Finally he reinstated it as a concise statement of the cruder theme, giving it a very interesting illustration. Above we see that the sheep of "Innocence" have been added to the cattle of "Experience," both alike sustained by, and preying upon, the mother clod, and the watery life of the body. Below the theme is expanded. The duck preys upon the frogs, the frogs upon the still lower life, all finally dependent on the worm and the earth. Behind the frogs is an expanse of sea, which I think refers us to the passage in "The Marriage": "But the Prolific [instinct] would cease to be Prolific unless the Devourer as a sea relieved the excess of his delights."

INFANT SORROW

THIS poem, like the foregoing, represents the harshness of things often considered beautiful, but from a different point of view. It originally belonged to a class of poems in which Blake attempts to begin at the beginning and to describe, stage by stage, the progress of error in this world. That may be why the picture shows a much later stage of life than the poem. In the MS. these two verses are the opening of a much longer poem attempting to summarise human life up to maturity. But these constitute much the best fragment, and Blake showed his artistic judgment in making them into a self-contained poem.

The theme is essentially like Wordsworth's of the child "trailing clouds of glory" "from God who is our home." But with this characteristic difference: that whereas for Wordsworth the clouds represented the gradually fading glories of a heavenly origin, they are for Blake the sudden fog of this earth choking the flames of the spirit as it enters earthly life from eternity. The "fiend hid in a cloud" was no fiend until the cloud began to stifle it, from which moment it attempts painfully and tortuously (as the full MS. poem describes) to creep forth, arriving too late, and to find "the time of youth is fled, And grey hairs are on my head."¹ The present poem ends with the moment of a first sulking acceptance of earth.

The association of the fiend and the cloud is interesting from several points of view. In the sixth "Job" illustration Blake develops one of his finest inventions on the theme of this association, which probably originates in the image of a thunder-clap.

It is further interesting to note how the cloud (especially in the

¹ Lines tried in other poems in the MS. and finally engraved in "The Angel."

INFANT SORROW

My mother groand! my father wept.
Into the dangerous world I leapt:
Helpless, naked, piping loud:
Like a fiend hid in a cloud.

Struggling in my fathers hands:
Striving against my swadling bands:
Bound and weary I thought best
To sulk upon my mothers breast.

INFANT SORROW

My mother groand ! my father wept,
Into the dangerous world I leapt :
Helpless, naked, piping loud :
Like a new-bud in a cloud.

Struggling in my father's hands :
Striving against my swaddling bands,
Bound and weary I thought best
To sulk upon my mother's breast.



“Job”) is systematically developed into the boundary between earth and heaven. For a spirit descending to this world, the cloud marks the territories of earth; but for the Piper already walking this earth it was the frontier of heaven and throne of the inspiring muse.

The principal interest of this poem is perhaps its contrast with the “Infant Joy” of “Innocence” which we interpreted as the joy of inception or impregnation, this being the sorrow of birth. “Joys impregnate. Sorrows bring forth,”—he says in the “Proverbs of Hell.” Both are necessary features of life’s full round.

THE HUMAN ABSTRACT

THIS poem, originally called "The human Image," is rather a difficult one, for it is Blake's attempt to summarise his philosophy of revolt against the object of worship he found in the mind of his age.

A forceful but more superficial poem called "A Divine Image" was engraved by Blake but never printed. Notwithstanding its title, it has the word "human" in every line and the word Divine only in one. Blake really makes no distinction. God is Man and Man is God, and either may be good or bad; but the bad has no foundation in Nature (a view subsequently changed as he changed his use of the word "nature"), being due to man's reliance upon negations.

When he came to engrave it, he described the poem neither as "A Divine" nor as The human "Image," but as '*The Human Abstract*,' by which he suggests that it is the normal result of abstract reasoning rather than an unfortunate instance of perversion. But this change was not made until after he had written (and perhaps engraved) "A Little BOY Lost," a poem in which "reason" is still in some sort approved. Blake is moving towards the position definitely reached in "The Marriage," that Reason, or the abstracting power of the mind, robs life of all its fullness and vigour.

The poem may be expounded thus :

The Human Abstract.
Pity would be no more,
If we did not make somebody
Poor,
And Mercy no more could be,
If all were as happy as we;

[Joy is positive and self-justifying but—]
The Abstracting power of the mind, separating
things from their roots, exalts as supreme
virtues things like Pity and Mercy which
imply grief, and are, therefore, rooted in
poverty of life rather than in fullness.

The Human Abstract

Pity would be no more
If we did not make somebody Poor.
And Mercy no more could be,
If all were as happy as we:

And mutual fear brings peace:
Till the selfish loves increase.
Then Cruelty knits a snare,
And spreads his baits with care.

He sits down with holy fears,
And waters the ground with tears:
Then Humility takes its root
Underneath his foot.

Soon spreads the dismal shade
Of Mystery over his head;
And the Catterpillar and Fly,
Feed on the Mystery.

And it bears the fruit of Deceit,
Ruddy and sweet to eat:
And the Raven his nest has made
In its thickest shade.

The Gods of the earth and sea,
Sought thro' Nature to find this Tree
But their search was all in vain;
There grows one in the Human Brain

The Human Abstract

Pity would be no more
If we did not make somebody Poor
And Mercy no more could be.
If all were as happy as we:

And mutual fear brings peace.
Till the selfish loves increase.
Then Cruely knits a snare
And spreads his baits with care.

He sits down with holy fears,
And waters the ground with tears;
Then Humility takes its root
Unseen beneath his foot.

Soon spreads the dismal shade
Of Mystery over his head;
And the Caterpillar and Fly
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And it bears the fruit of Deceit,
Ruddy and sweet to eat;
And the Raven his nest has made
In its thickest shade.

The Gods of the earth and sea,
Sought thro Nature to find this Tree
But their search was all in vain:
There grows one in the Human Brain



And mutual fear brings peace;
Till the selfish loves increase.

Even Peace may be stablished on fear, and is then more favourable to the selfish love of the 'Pebble' than to the innocent love of the 'Clod.'

Then Cruelty knits a snare
And spreads his baits with care.

The 'selfish loves' are the source of cruelty which, not content with fear (repulsion), adds lures (attractions) as means of entrapping its victims.

He sits down with holy fears,
And waters the ground with
tears:

Then Humility takes its root
Underneath his foot.

Cruelty establishes its seat by conferring sanctity upon Fear, and fertilises earth with grief (instead of joy). The true root of Humility springs from under the foot of the tyrant (and it is not, therefore, a spiritual grace).

Soon spreads the dismal shade
Of Mystery over his head:
And the Catterpillar and Fly,
Feed on the Mystery.

Abstract philosophy soon adds darkness and sterility to the mind by erecting an over-awing metaphysical Mystery which becomes the stock-in-trade of the learned and religious world, who flourish on robbing life of its health and freshness.

And it bears the fruit of Deceit,
Ruddy and sweet to eat:
And the Raven his nest has made
In its thickest shade.

Intellectual unreality ripens into hypocrisy and deceit and into all the indulgences of stolen sweets until the lusts in their most voracious form make their home in its darkest depths.

The Gods of the earth and sea,
Sought thro' Nature to find this
Tree
But their search was all in vain:
There grows one in the Human
Brain

But the natural powers of earth do not generate this monstrous and ramified growth, for philosophic abstraction with all its consequences is a growth of the errant human mind.

A LITTLE BOY LOST

THIS song is of great interest from many points of view. It is the only 'lost child' poem in the MS. book, though its title was a later addition. This no doubt is intended to connect it with "*The Little Boy lost*" and "found" of "*Innocence*," and conveys the meaning that though a lost little boy *may* be found, *this* is an instance of one who was lost and not found. It is a fierce indictment of man's interference with the growing mind; the assumed authority of the priest in this case (and of the father in the parallel case of "Ona," *A Little GIRL*) crushes the freedom which leads through experience to wisdom.

The striking thing in either case is that Blake's own sympathies are only partially with the views expressed though entirely with the individuals. Blake doubtless considered that Ona ("*A Little GIRL Lost*") was deep in the sweet delusions, or rather half awakenings, of the flesh, and this little boy is in the half light of "*Reason*." But as individuals they command Blake's complete and passionate sympathy as against their persecutors. To rob the soul of its necessary experience is to destroy it, and this is what in our presumption we are always doing. It is nothing less than spiritual murder to terrify a child out of freedom of thought and to persuade the parents that their child is lost. It is a repetition of the burnings at the stake of earlier centuries. And yet (Blake insists) it is happening every day in our midst.¹

¹ Just as the little Black Boy and his visionary friend (the little English boy) had their prototypes, perhaps, in Blake and his brother, so one may consider that this little boy has his prototype not in any actual child, but in Tom Paine, author of "*The Age of Reason*," of whom Blake said: "Christ died as an Unbeliever, & if the Bishops had their will,

A Little BOY Lost

Nought loves another as itself
Nor venerates another so,
Nor is it possible to Thought
A greater than itself to know:

And Father, how can I love you,
Or any of my brothers more?
I love you like the little bird
That picks up crumbs around the door.

The Priest sat by and heard the child,
In trembling zeal he siez'd his hair:
He led him by his little coat:
And all admir'd the Priestly care.

And standing on the altar high,
Lo what a fiend is here! said he:
One who sets reason up for judge
Of our most holy Mystery.

The weeping child could not be heard,
The weeping parents wept in vain:
They strip'd him to his little shirt,
And bound him in an iron chain.

And burn'd him in a holy place,
Where many had been burn'd before:
The weeping parents wept in vain.
Are such things done on Albions shore.

A Little BOY Lost

Nought loves another as itself
Nor venerates another so
Nor is it possible to thought
A greater than itself to know:

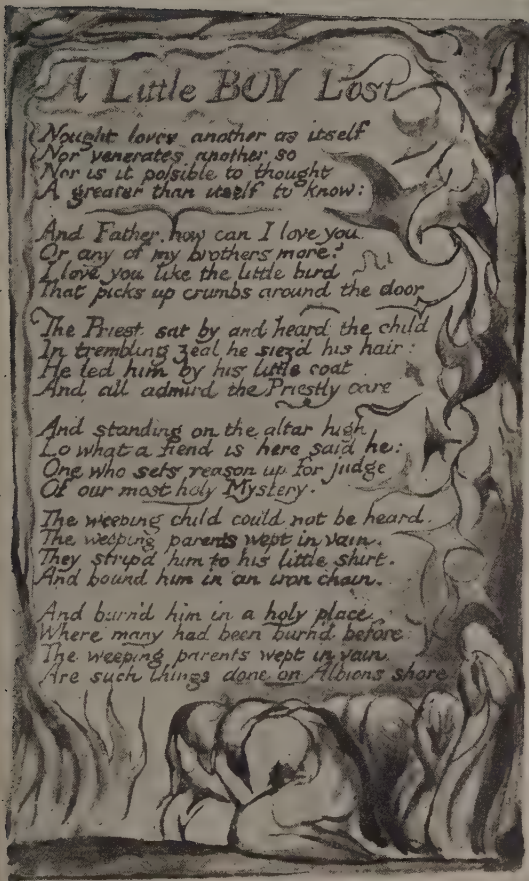
And Father, how can I love you
Or any of my brothers more?
I love you like the little bird
That picks up crumbs around the door

The Priest sat by and heard the child
In trembling zeal he seized his hair:
He led him by his little coat
And all admired the Priestly care

And standing on the altar high
Lo what a fiend is here said he:
One who sets reason up for judge
Of our most holy Mystery.

The weeping child could not be heard.
The weeping parents wept in vain.
They stripped him to his little shirt.
And bound him in an iron chain.

And burnt him in a holy place
Where many had been burnt before.
The weeping parents wept in vain.
Are such things done on Albion's shore



The seizing of the child by its hair and the stripping of its shirt are not, I think, a mere appeal to our pity, but are symbolical of the ease with which the grown-up and the professional strip a child's mind of its defences, humiliating reason and nature, not by legitimate argument but by assumed authority.

But it is interesting that Blake should make the Priest's charge against the child that he "sets reason up for judge" because in "The Marriage" Blake remarks, "All Bibles or sacred codes, have been the causes of the following Errors: . . . that Reason, called Good, is alone from the Soul." This charge against orthodoxy in "The Marriage" seems very similar to the charge he represents orthodoxy as making against innocence in the present poem. And it is this which leads me to suppose that Blake's sympathies are by no means entirely with the child's argument, however strongly they may be with the child himself.

It is important to notice that though this is definitely a poem of "thought" experience, its opening theme, like that of "The Clod & the Pebble," is love.

Blake seems to be saying in both poems that love deeply considered is inevitably egoistic. In the first draft of the MS. the child said, "I love myself, so does the bird."

It seems clear that the child's thought, and perhaps even the Pebble's, is a stage upon "The road of excess" that "leads to the palace of wisdom." But "the priest lays his curse on the fairest joys,"¹ and both the love experience and the thought experience are poisoned or destroyed by the blight of his prohibitions. In "To Tirzah" we have a more radical escape from the problem.

so would Paine: . . . Let the Bishop prove that he has not spoken against the Holy Ghost, who in Paine strives with Christendom as in Christ he strove with the Jews."

¹ "The Marriage," p. 9.

THE LITTLE VAGABOND

THIS is a poem of thought experience which corresponds to "The Little Black Boy" in "Innocence." But the Little Black Boy, notwithstanding his birth in the southern wild, is in a far better position to discover the true relations of things than the poor little vagabond born in the heart of a distorted civilisation. The sun and trees and beasts of the Southern wild were all there in their natural world, and above all the mother with her mother's love and wisdom.

For the Little Vagabond the so-called good things are evil, and the so-called evil things are good. He can see only power, and no love, in the God who has such churches and such worshippers, and who has no sympathy with the natural physical wants of mankind. But in warmth and kindness and good cheer the child finds, amongst the world's "publicans and sinners," all that he knows for good. Yet out of this confused and topsy-turvy world he conceives a thought that puts all our theologies to shame, and the tiny illustration expressing it conveys in a space scarcely more than two inches square the noblest conception of Blake's ever-recurring idea that forgiveness is the only power of salvation.

The Little Vagabond

Dear Mother, dear Mother, the Church is cold.
But the Ale-house is healthy, & pleasant & warm:
Besides I can tell where I am use'd well.
Such usage in heaven will never do well.

But if at the Church they would give us some Ale,
And a pleasant fire, our souls to regale;
We'd sing and we'd pray all the live-long day;
Nor ever once wish from the Church to stray.

Then the Parson might preach & drink & sing,
And we'd be as happy as birds in the spring:
And modest dame Lurch, who is always at Church,
Would not have bandy children nor fasting nor birch.

And God like a father rejoicing to see,
His children as pleasant and happy as he:
Would have no more quarrel with the Devil or the Barrel
But kiss him & give him both drink and apparel.



The Little Vagabond

Dear Mother dear Mother the Church is cold.
 But the Ale house is healthy & pleasant & warm:
 Besides I can tell where I am used well,
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THE FLY

THIS remarkable poem was one of the last in the MS.—the last of all those engraved. The story is perhaps best pictured as an actual incident, though Mr Damon (p. 275) thinks Blake had Gray's poem in mind.

A reflex movement on the poet's part had been followed by what was to him a tremendous consequence, or what at first seemed so—a dead body lay where an instant before a live creature had been playing. He first accuses himself of guilt (*vide* MS.), but this idea will not survive reflection, because he had no ill-intention, indeed nothing to call an intention at all.

He further reflects how the case might have been his own, for all life is akin, and some equally blind cause might have swept away *his* life.

He then wrote the last verse, saying in effect that life or death makes no odds, for he himself (a living creature) is the "happy fly," not the dead one. But such a statement, he felt, needed explanation, as it certainly does—far more than he gives us in the verse he next added, about life and thought.

By expanding the idea of this, however, I think we arrive at some such thought as this: Since nothing exists for us at all except as it exists for us in conscious thought (*cp.* "All Things Exist in the Human Imagination," "Jerusalem," 69²⁵, and many similar passages), any blind negation of thought (such as Death), though it sweep over our lives, fails to invade the life itself. Such a negation and its consequences have no real existence for experience. (As a purely external thing the fly's death may exist for the poet, but not for the fly.)

Blake's final note of triumph in the last verse means, I take it, that since happiness is something in conscious thought, and since thought can never be dead (it would cease to be thought if it were), happiness cannot be touched by death. The two cannot meet. As Epicurus said: "Where I am death is not: where death is I am not."

This way of thinking appears, I am afraid, mere sophistry to some minds. But I doubt whether we can ever understand Blake till it means something for us. I shall, therefore, attempt another way of putting it. The *Present*, in which we necessarily live and move and have our being (for we cannot actually live in either the Past or the Future—the Past which is gone, or the Future which is not yet come)—the Present is something we not only need never fear to lose, but something we cannot ever possibly escape. And this is what I believe Blake means by such expressions as “A Vision of the Eternal Now” (Lavater) and “the Eternal which is always present to the wise” (The Four Zoas, Night the Ninth).

In conclusion I would like to point out that though Blake naturally connected this vision of “The Immortal Man that cannot Die” (Gates of Paradise) with his belief in life *after* death,¹ the two conceptions are not the same. The question whether there is a better life *after* death does not affect the Vision of the Eternal Now, because for that there *is* no ‘after’ or ‘before.’ And Blake sometimes speaks in what is for him a strangely hypothetical way of what is generally called the “future” life. “Perhaps,” he says, writing to Linnell in his later years (probably early in 1826, but this letter is undated)—“perhaps, & I verily believe it, Every death is an improvement in the State of the Departed.”² The design shows Life’s frailty and joy.

¹ Cp. “This world of Imagination is the world of Eternity . . . into which we shall all go after the death of the Vegetated body.” (“The Last Judgment” Essay.)

² Cp. “But when once I did descry
The Immortal man that cannot Die
Thro evening shades I haste away
To close the Labours of my Day
The Door of Death I open found
And the Worm Weaving in the Ground.”

This passage surely expresses a joyous acceptance of death, not because of something to be found after death, but because of something that has been found *in* life.

THE FLY.

Little Fly	If thought is life
Thy summers play,	And strength & breath:
My thoughtless hand	And the want
Has brush'd away.	Of thought is death;

Am not I	Then am I
A fly like thee?	A happy fly,
Or art not thou	If I live,
A man like me?	Or if I die.

For I dance
And drink & sing:
Till some blind hand
Shall brush my wing.

THE FLY.

Little Fly
Thy summons play.
My thoughtless hand
Has brushed away.

Am not I
A fly like thee?
Or art not thou
A man like me?

For I dance
And drink & sing;
Till some blind hand
Shall brush my wing.

If thought is life
And strength & breath;
And the want
Of thought is death;

Then am I
A happy fly.
If I live
Or if I die.



TO TIRZAH

THIS singular plate was probably the last one added to the "Songs." It differs both in the character of the illustration and the matter of the verse from all the other "Songs," and was in fact so much out of key with them that it was not always included by Blake in the book (*e.g.*, the Carey copy). It is almost more like a diminished page from "Jerusalem" than one of the "Songs." For the first time Blake uses a symbolic name which is to reappear (with somewhat changed significance) in later works.¹

The poem shows Blake's restless mind in a new phase. It is his return to Christianity after the bitterness and disillusionments of Experience. But it is itself a very bitter return. The happy, sentimental loveliness of the Christianity in such poems as "The Lamb," "The Little Black Boy," and "A Cradle Song," broke down under the bitter onslaughts of Experience.

The poem is difficult because Blake attempted to condense a whole philosophy into four little verses. It can only be understood in relation to other poems and prose, and also, I think, to Blake's

¹ For the first time in the "Songs"; the name Luvah had appeared in the "Book of Thel." In the "Song of Liberty" (which I entirely agree with Mr Plowman in regarding as an Epilogue to "The Marriage") he had used the name Urthona, and this was probably now already engraved. The name Tirzah is Biblical and comes from the Song of Songs. But from analogy with other of Blake's symbolical names I regard it as possibly selected because of a special meaning Blake read into the phonetic form. The last word of the third line of the third verse is "tears." And I conceive that "Tirzah" (pronounced 'Tearsah') may possibly have symbolised the tearful earthly mother—or rather the unregenerate Nature that bodily begets us. For "Tirzah" is amongst other things the embodiment of that sentimental love and pity we have seen in "The Angel" and the false parental solicitude we have seen in "The Little Girl Lost" and "Found" (Lyca).

own actual experiences. It is in a sense biographical, though perhaps not in the sense it appears to be; for though the two impersonations addressed represent Sex-love and Mother-love, the poem cannot be interpreted as throwing any new light upon Blake's relations to his own wife or his own mother, though it may confirm what we already know.

The first verse, ending with the words "Then what have I to do with thee?" is definitely addressed "To Tirzah," who represents Sex-love or "generation" in the tearful, tragic aspect which its material side presented to Blake. It is best explained by the general theme of the "Gates of Paradise." This was engraved six years after Robert's death, but the thirteenth plate was clearly inspired by the vision Blake had at the moment when he saw his brother's spirit ascend through the ceiling. It was then that the Time-process, with its passage from earthly generation to earthly decay, lost its bitterness for Blake. There seems no doubt that Robert Blake's death liberated something in Blake's mind that enabled him to see temporal existence as a thing outside, and almost unconnected with, his real life.¹

Whate'er is Born of Mortal Birth,
Must be consumed with the Earth
To rise from Generation free:
Then what have I to do with thee?

The next verse is a summary of the story of the Fall. Sex life was assumed to have originated in the eating of the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge. Pride made Man and Woman defy God's command, and the fruit of the "knowledge of good and evil" led them to feel shame at their own nudity.² Sex blossomed into life

¹ *Vide supra*, Expository Preface, p. 34 f., and also the preceding poem, "The Fly."

² *Cp.* Genesis ii. 25, and iii. 7.

that morning, to be condemned in the evening, when God was heard walking in the Garden.¹ But God's mercy commuted the sentence of death to banishment from Paradise, which Blake calls "sleep," symbolising temporal life in the flesh.

The Sexes sprung from Shame & Pride
 Blowd in the morn: in evening died
 But Mercy changd Death into Sleep:
 The Sexes rose to work & weep.

In these last lines we touch biography again. Blake's radiant morning of sex experience had after a time been plunged into at least one episode of grief and pain, of which the MS. of *Experience* (and before that, perhaps, "The Book of Thel") leaves the footprints. From this he recovered, first by finding that there is something blessed in the "bond" of marriage.² This was sleep, where complete tragedy had been death. Finally he and his wife rose to find a blessedness in labour and pain shared together, which was something more than sleep, if not yet perfect day.

But Blake has further to go, and from the union of the Sexes in a life of toil and companionship, he naturally passes to Motherhood and Birth. The Earthly mother he regards as identifying herself with Earth's cruel limitations of the Soul's divine powers, by hedging the child round with her selfish and narrowing pity. In "Jerusalem" Blake constantly enlarges this theme of the selfishness of family ties and narrow family affections.³

From all this nothing but the great self-sacrifice of Jesus can redeem

¹ "And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day."—Gen. iii. 8.

² *Vide infra*, "The Marriage Ring," p. 268.

³ *Cp.* "Jerusalem," 27, vv. 20 and 21 of the poem, etc.

us. This restores us to a greater life in the life of brotherhood, which is the Divine Humanity.¹

Thou Mother of my Mortal part,
With cruelty didst mould my Heart
And with false self-deceiving tears,
Didst bind my Nostrils Eyes & Ears.

Didst close my Tongue in senseless clay ²
And me to Mortal Life betray:
The Death of Jesus set me free,
Then what have I to do with thee?

Lastly, we must look at the illustration. There are the two women that have failed to save, representing Sex-love and Mother-love, and there is the Spirit of sacrifice administering the water of life to the fallen body of man, whereby "It is Raised a Spiritual Body." It only remains to point out that it is still "a body." Blake does not desert the flesh, nor does he, in point of fact, desert either the Mother-love or the Sex-love of Man. As ever, he returns to earth, to find it new; and in the higher life is met all that has ever seemed fair.³

¹ *Cp.* "... every kindness to another is a little Death
In the Divine Image nor can Man exist but by Brotherhood."

"Jerusalem," 96^{27, 28}.

² It is a very persistent theme of Blake's that the senses are the mere faint vestiges of our real divine powers—birth is a loss of nearly, but not quite, all our divine faculties. This is the meaning of the passage in "The Marriage" that speaks of an "improvement of sensual enjoyment," p. 4, *i.e.* a restoration. *Cp.* also "Urizen," Ch. iv (*b*), "Jerusalem," 49, etc.

³ *Cp.* "Jerusalem," 49, "the Bodies in which all Animals & Vegetations, the Earth & Heaven / Were contained in the All Glorious Imagination."

To Tirzah

Whate'er is Born of Mortal Birth,
Must be consumed with the Earth
To rise from Generation free:
Then what have I to do with thee?

The Sexes sprung from Shame & Pride
Blowd in the morn; in evening died
But Mercy changd Death into Sleep;
The Sexes rose to work & weep.

Thou Mother of my Mortal part,
With cruelty didst mould my Heart.
And with false self-decieving tears,
Didst bind my Nostrils Eyes & Ears.

Didst close my Tongue in senseless clay
And me to Mortal Life betray:
The Death of Jesus set me free.
Then what have I to do with thee?

It is Raised
a Spiritual Body.

To Tirzah

Whatever is Born of Mortal Birth,
Must be consumed with the Earth
Rise from Corruption & see;
Then what have I to do with thee?

The Sins sprung from Shame & Pride
Blow as the north, in evening tide,
But Mercy changed Death into Sleep;
The Sins rose to work & weep.

Thou Mother of my Mortal part,
With crys, I didst mould my heart
And with thine self-deceiving tears,
I didst bind my Nostrils Eyes & Ears,
Didst close my Tongue in senseless clasp,
And me in Mortal Life betray;
The Death of Jesus set me free,
Then what have I to do with thee?



III

SONGS OF PROPHECY

LONDON.

THE TYGER.

THE CHIMNEY SWEEPER.

HOLY THURSDAY.

THE SCHOOL BOY.

THE songs in this Section are of all Blake's early poetry the most simple in their earnest prophetic passion, and as such may be fitly brought together. The order (except for "The School Boy," which was originally written for "Innocence") is that of their composition. All are prophetic in character, and except for "The Tyger," all pulse and beat with a passionate sense of social responsibility. Yet without the Tyger's fierce vindication of the power of light in darkness the sense of oppression would be almost intolerable.

"The Tyger" also relieves the prophetic burden of a personal element. In the MS., before Blake wrote this supreme lyric, his poems are nearly all in the first person (sometimes only dramatically introducing it), and a majority actually begin like the "London" with the first personal pronoun. After "The Tyger" very few of the poems are in the first person. "Holy Thursday" and even the less noble "Chimney Sweeper" are entirely without the note of personal complaint.

It is this strain of social responsibility that makes the "London" and the "Holy Thursday" rank amongst Blake's greatest utterances. An earlier treatment of the theme of the "London" throws light

upon Blake's rapid development at this moment, and should be read in connection with the engraved poems.

Why should I care for the men of thames
Or the cheating waves of chartered streams
Or shrink at the little blasts of fear
That the hireling blows into my ear.

Tho born on the cheating banks of Thames
Tho his waters bathed my infant limbs
The Ohio shall wash his stains from me
I was born a slave but I go to be free.

Fine as this poem is it is entirely personal. Both the resentment and the proposed remedy concern Blake himself. In the "London" the personal element is still there. There is a suggestion of the thought, "What is this hateful city to me?" and the conclusion is unrelieved gloom. But the personal element recedes into the background as the passionate sense of social wrong predominates. In "The Chimney Sweeper" it has entirely disappeared, although the gloom and bitterness remain. At last in "Holy Thursday," while the scathing prophetic denunciation is fiercer than ever, the finale is upon a note of visionary exaltation and tenderness, divinely impersonal.

All three of the engraved poems sound a new note in Blake's poetry. We find him concerned neither with himself nor with types, but filled with grief for actual faces he has seen and for cries almost within earshot as he writes.

"The School Boy" takes us back to the type again and perhaps to Blake himself. But it is beautifully tender and convincing. My excuse for introducing it here is partly that Blake himself loved to introduce it as he drew to a close; partly that its earnest and beautiful appeal has an enduring social value, and partly because it

LONDON

I wander thro' each charter'd street,
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every Man,
In every Infants cry of fear,
In every voice; in every ban,
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear

How the Chimney-sweepers cry
Every blackning Church appalls,
And the hapless Soldiers sigh
Runs in blood down Palace walls

But most thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlots curse
Blasts the new-born Infants tear
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse



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Near where the charter'd Thames does flow,
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How the youthful Harlots curse
Blasts the new-born Infants tear
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse

brings us back to the perfect lyrical vein of Innocence without loss of either the depths or the fearless insight we have found in the best of the "Songs of Experience."¹ It serves as a return to Blake's original theme, and the "return" to the beginning is a form we have learnt to regard as a persistent characteristic of Blake's art.

The social note occurs in "A Little BOY Lost" (written after the "London" and "The Tyger," but before "The Chimney Sweeper" and "Holy Thursday"), but it only flashes out in the last line. The social note also occurs in that single verse which Mr Plowman thinks originally belonged to this poem, but which I regard as more probably a rejected verse of "The human Image":

There souls of men are bought & sold
And milkfed infancy for gold
And youth to slaughter houses led
And beauty for a bit of bread.

The main theme, however, of "A Little BOY Lost" is the iniquity of crushing original thought, and the little boy is a pure type.

¹ In a copy of the "Songs" sold by Mrs Blake after the poet's death, and marked "Blake's own," "The School Boy" is the last of all the "Songs," and perhaps in one other copy. More usually it is the last but one, "The Voice of the Ancient Bard" being the last.

LONDON

It is impossible to approach this poem without emotion. Has any great city, since the prophets of Israel, received such an indictment in so few words! The manuscript version shows that Blake first described the streets and the Thames as "dirty." One can hardly exaggerate the increase in power achieved by the substitution of the magic word "charterd," borrowed from the MS. poem, "Why should I care for the men of thames." Though charters, in origin, are deeds of freedom, they inevitably become dead bounds to liberty and the fortress walls of vested rights. Men become the hedged-in victims of system, systems that originally grew up in "the Human Brain." In his manuscript Blake spoke in the last line of the second verse of the "german forged links."¹ But before he engraved the poem he altered the line to "the mind forgd manacles," which expresses a much more universal idea.

In the second line of the third verse he wrote in manuscript, "Blackens oer the churches walls," which shows that he meant, not that the churches are appalled, but made appalling, by the Chimney Sweeper's cry, as the walls of palaces are seen in spiritual vision stained with the blood of soldiers.

Yet even these are less terrible than the hideous perversion of the fairest joy on earth, voiced in the midnight cry of the young harlot. Love itself and the beauty of marriage and birth are stained by this most cruel misery of all. This verse was added after Blake's genius had at last completely found itself in "The Tyger."

It is startling to reflect how far Blake was in advance of his age in attributing these tragedies not to the individual's own fault but to the Society which tolerated them.

¹ Blake no doubt disliked the association of England with Prussian militarism, which had characterised the policy of Chatham, and was revived against the French Revolution.

THE TYGER¹

It was some five years of great inward events since Blake had piped his "song about a Lamb." The wild valleys, the reeds he had plucked, the stream he had stained, had led him on to dark and tangled forests. Life had discovered to him cruelty, disillusionment, and bitterness. Its lispng sweetness had faded into the distance, and yet its grandeur and glory had been revealed in tenfold power.

It was a very different mind, therefore, that began to write "Little Lamb," from that which opened the poem, "Tyger, Tyger," and the change in the thing addressed from the gentle creature feeding "by the stream & o'er the mead" to the dread creation "burning bright in the forests of the night," accords with a deep change in the questioning mind as it develops from the query, "Who made thee, Dost thou know who made thee?" to

What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

For Blake's mind had in the interval dwelt much in "distant deeps and skies," and from being a sweet place of Arcadian song and vision it had become a dread deep of mystery and power fraught with flashes of prophecy. This change itself was not art, nor anything produced by the artist. It was the change brought about by spiritual happenings in a sensitive, selective, and strangely retentive place. Impressions went into that mind and disappeared from sight that were not to be lost; and when some new impression broke the seal of

¹ As mentioned in the Preface this essay was the original nucleus of the whole book, so that it is planned on a more expansive scale than the other commentaries. This would perhaps in any case be justified by the poem's intrinsic importance and the wide recognition it has long had as one of the greatest in our literature.

utterance, forgotten things woke and poured forth in living imagery that added a mysterious and matured richness to the inspiration of the moment. This sometimes led to confusion and apparent, if not real, turbidity; but in his greatest moments the fusion of the living moment with the mind's stored wealth is perfect. And all the time there is a third factor at work, the artist himself, who stands in this poem like a mighty founder above molten streams of gold, fiercely directing their fluid moment into moulds of a symmetry and beauty that can never perish.

But though the beauty and form are sometimes almost perfect, the meaning is often extraordinarily difficult to trace. To find it is like the attempt to examine the history and rationale of plutonic rocks, that have passed through dark regions of heat and pressure, obliterating all traces of that pristine life which first secreted their substance from the elements. It requires a kind of psychological chemistry to read them.

We must know Blake's mind well; we must jealously hold in view the circumstances of the moment; and we must patiently examine the documents he has left us, if we are to make the gold and silver strands of his speech deliver their message from his subterranean deeps.

The actual process of creation we shall have opportunity to examine when we come to discuss the MS. Our business here will be to criticise the completed form and develop the clues we find to its meaning.

The immediate origin of the poem is the inward vision of the tiger in the forest. This is a natural image, as natural as that of the lamb in the fields, and it is noticeable that it never becomes an avowed symbol as the Lamb does. The Lamb is identified with the symbol for Christ, but to the end the Tyger remains on the surface of the poem a natural tiger on the natural earth, unrepresentative of anything but itself. In another sense, it is pure vision; for whereas

The Tyger.

Tyger Tyger, burning bright,
In the forests of the night;
What immortal hand or eye,
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies,
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand, dare sieze the fire?

And what shoulder, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? & what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain,
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp,
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears
And water'd heaven with their tears:
Did he smile his work to see?
→ Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger Tyger burning bright,
In the forests of the night:
What immortal hand or eye,
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

The Tyger.

Tyger Tyger, burning bright,
In the forests of the night:
What immortal hand or eye,
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand, dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? & what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain,
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp,
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears,
And water'd heaven with their tears:
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger Tyger burning bright,
In the forests of the night:
What immortal hand or eye,
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?



Blake had certainly seen lambs in the fields and children playing with them, we know that he never had seen a tiger in the forests, and one would almost say, if one judged by the illustration, that he had never seen one, where they were in those days kept, at the Tower. As one looks at that quaint creature in the design, one almost wishes Blake had chosen to paint its purely spiritual form as he painted the ghost of a flea. But he has tried to portray the smile of the Deity on its lips, and to show the ultimate "humanity divine" of Nature's most terrific beast—unless, perhaps, it is best to regard the whole design as a mask, deriding those who expect upon a mortal page the picture of the Deity at work.

Some of Blake's revisions are the more interesting in that they are returns to his first thought. "Hand or eye" became "hand and eye" until he realised the much greater grandeur of his original phrase, suggesting, as it does, that either word is but a cumbrous analogy for the organ of a power whose glance can fashion like a hand, or whose span, like an eye, can comprehend immensity. Again the coupling of "shoulder" and "art" mysteriously combines the definiteness of bodily imagery with the splendour of a spiritual power, which Blake lost for a moment when he changed the line to:

What the shoulder what the knee.

When we remember the tremendous effect he gets in his great design, *The Ancient of Days*, by the use of this very image of the shoulder and the knee, we realise how well he knew how to reject for verse what he selects for design. The design is nearly contemporary, and appears to me to be the true illustration to this poem, 'Light piercing thro' Darkness.' It is sometimes called the Act of Creation.

One of Blake's boldest strokes of craftsmanship is to leave the sentence incomplete in the last line of this verse; for though he may possibly have authorised Mr Malkin's introduction of the word

"forged" in his printed version, he never attempts to alter it in the engraved issues, as he probably could easily have done had he wished. Originally, the sentence was continued in the next verse:

Could fetch it from the furnace deep
And in thy horrid ribs dare sleep
In the well of sanguine woe . . .

and a fifth verse began before this was completed:

In what clay & in what mould
Were thine eyes of fury rold.

These fragments have a double interest. They testify the master craftsmanship of the artist who could reject such splendid imagery when it led him away from his adopted end, and they show us a poem pregnant with another purpose that was never brought to the birth.

The MS. reveals Blake as having set out to show the purifying splendour of energy in a world of dark and tangled motives and desires. His exultation at the discovery of good in the terrible things of earth, the goodness of strength, seems to carry him away on the hope that he may roll up all the horror of creation into the purging flame of this image of splendour. But it will not do. Might is splendid, but its splendour escapes when cruelty and fury and "sanguine woe" are its manifestations. These must remain for us unredeemed facts if we are to keep our intellectual integrity, and we must seek our final synthesis by some other way, if at all, for:

"it is excellent
To have a giant's strength; but it is tyrannous
To use it like a giant."¹

It was, perhaps, the most critical moment in his artistic life when Blake turned aside from this attempt to glorify the sordid things of life. For the moment he is content with the introduction of the

¹ "Measure for Measure."

fiery imagery of the smithy for the fourth verse, and the grand idea of completing the whole by a return to the opening verse for the fifth. The spiritual demand for a synthesis, however, was bound to return; which we shall see how he finally satisfies in his great verse about the stars.

But we must not leave this fourth verse without noting how the chain carries the 'motive' of the tangled forest and the sinewy heart into the imagery of the forge and the brain. The chain is the symbol of intellectual confinement, as the sinews and the forest were of bodily, and emotional, confinement—against which, and yet through, and in, which, the spirit struggles into life.

The verse derives its swift staccato form from the suspended sentence now immediately preceding it:

What dread hand? & what dread feet?

This starts a beat and movement of fierce queries which are continued:

What the hammer? what the chain,
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp,
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

It was after he had repeated the first verse for his finale that Blake conceived the idea of introducing the Lamb in contrast to the Tyger, first by a new version of verse three, which was later to become a substitution for verse four.

But in this final version the swift succession of dental cadences that end verse four seem to complete the sledge strokes of creation, and we pass to the serenity of Sabbath contemplation in verse five. It almost seems as though the Great Smith's handiwork, glowing from the furnace, is plunged in the waters of heaven to be cooled and tempered e'er we scan it for an answer to its meaning.

Let us pause on this threshold to look back. There is a point

remaining of great critical interest. When Blake first wrote the words, "What dread hand and what dread feet," the MS. makes it clear that hands and feet were alike those of the Creator. Yet if Dr Sampson is right in supposing that Malkin's version, "What dread hand forged thy dread feet," was probably authorised by Blake, he changed the meaning, and apparently did not much care whose hands or feet they were, so long as it sounded all right. No doubt there is something in this. Blake often—and sometimes completely—changed the meaning of his lines and his designs. When he discovered some invention that pleased him, he would try it in a number of contexts until he got some place where it really seemed to fit.¹ But the reason he is able to be indifferent in this instance is a profound one.

The whole thesis of "The Tyger" is that he is a spiritual expression of the Creator himself. Blake wrote it very soon after he had composed the poem, "To Nobodaddy" (Father No-one), rejecting the God men worshipped in the churches, and "The Tyger" is a tremendous treatise enunciating the nature of the God that *does* exist—the God that is mightily and terribly visible in his manifestations. The "feet" therefore are at once the feet of the creature and, spiritually seen, of the terrific Power they reveal.

The first four verses surge and roll backwards and forwards from the creature to the Creator, and from the Creator to the creature, as though the poet were afraid of our thinking of them apart: first the tiger in the forest, then the immortal hand or eye; then the far-dwelling fires of the creature's eyes, and the wings that dare to seek, the hand that dares to cull them; next (reversing the order), the shoulder and art of the divine craftsman, the sinews of the living heart

¹ There are many examples of this, as for instance the phrase, "grey hairs were on my head," in the MS. book. But I can recall no instance of his having repeated a phrase in his *published* work in two different senses.

of the creature; the hand of the Deity, and then—no doubt—the feet of the beast.

It is this pulse of creation that enables us to understand with certainty verse four. As the hammer is the instrument of the Creator, the chain must be the symbol of the thing created, which is therefore the same thing as the next line reveals emerging from the furnace of God, the awesome “brain” that nothing but the “dread grasp” of God Himself dare “clasp.”

It is now safe to say that we have travelled far from the central ganglion of *Felis Tigris*. We are in the presence of what was for Blake the very heart of the mystery of existence—the necessity for the infinite to force itself into the limitations and circumscriptions of finite life. The “chain” is Blake’s consistent symbol for the slavery of earthly existence; the dire necessity we mortals are under to express the Divine in deed and thought, in speech and song, in line and colour, in minutes and hours, in self-sacrifice and forgiveness—things which at best reveal but often obscure, and at times even banish and kill, the heavenly glories of the all-compassing Eternal and Divine.

The sublime calm of the fifth verse and its new imagery were not reached by a single effort. Blake at first conceived the idea of laughter in the heavens. As the lamb and the tiger appear before their Maker, a great roll of laughter at the cosmic comedy seems to shake the skies. It is the laughter of the Child in “The Piper” become Protean in the “Demiurge.” And as the Child’s laughter was followed by tears, so there followed in Blake’s mind the wonderful image of the weeping heavens. This image was so calm that in the end it superseded the laughter; and then the tears were put first, turning the laughter to the serenity of a smile, as the Deity beheld his twofold work.

It is difficult at first to recognise in this new atmosphere the repetition of the whole theme of the poem: the fierce and glorious lights of heaven plunged into the dim griefs of earth. And indeed the new verse, though it certainly repeats it, does far more than repeat the theme of the whole. It collects many chapters of Blake's mind into one supreme symbol; and this was possible because his profusion of imagery was the rich clothing of an essentially childlike and simple mind; and from whatever approach we begin interpretation, it ends in the same great central theme of his system, the Incarnation. In the first place, then, the stars are the broken and scattered lights of eternity which night itself cannot quench, but which melt into dawn with the dewy return of day. They symbolise the hard cold realm of Reason and of war, that held the earth before Compassion came with Christ:

When the stars threw down their spears
And water'd heaven with their tears.

But the tears symbolise generation and birth, and it may well be that Blake is consciously reverting to the imagery of "The Blossom," lifting it to cosmic grandeur as the little birds become the stars that wing their way through heaven, the swift arrow becomes their spears of power, and the sobbing of the bird of Calvary becomes the entrance of the Deity into earth's watery vale by his incarnation in the Virgin's womb.

Are the Lamb and the Tyger alike the offspring of that Divine event? Does God smile equally upon the two? Are both expressions of His very mind and being? There is some meaning even deeper than this, I think, in Blake's question. It does not merely mean, "Did God make both?" It means to ask whether when the morning breaks upon the forests of the night, we shall then see that in making the Lamb God *had* made the Tyger—in making the Tyger, *had* made the Lamb?

When the stars threw down their spears
And water'd heaven with their tears:
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Yet even in the serenity of this smile, I think there is still something of the exultation that was in the Titan laughter of the gods.

The question of the poem so far may be expressed thus: "Does the creative power erstwhile dimly and fragmentarily perceived by us as the fierce and broken lights of night—does it, in its melting mood that issues in the final glory, still acknowledge and authenticate the more terrible aspect of Nature; and is there, for instance, room for the satanic fires and purgatorial pains of genius in a world ultimately dedicated to tenderness, love and harmony?"

And so we reach the concluding stanza, exactly repeating the opening one, except that the word "could" in the first verse, changes into "dare" in the last line of the poem, and we have

What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry.

In an early version Blake tried this stronger form in the first verse. But there the word "dare" could have had no more significance than it has in the immediately succeeding verses, where we are constantly made to feel the awfulness of the realms compassed, and the forces controlled, in the physical act of creation. "On what wings dare he aspire, what the hand dare seize the fire." And again at last: "What dread grasp dare its deadly terrors clasp."

But here, after the penultimate verse about the stars, the word "dare" can no longer be read in association with the imagery of merely physical creation, however splendid. We are now in the presence of a still more awful mystery—the mystery of the moral courage of creation; and by using the word "could" in the first

stanza we are made to feel the full force of the word "dare" in this later sense. "Who could?" indeed: but how much more "Who dare?"

This last verse is the now familiar "return," which finds Earth something new.

The Tyger, though still a tiger, has become, as it seems to me, very much besides; nothing less indeed than the Divine spark, the fiercely struggling individuality, thickly hedged about by the dense forest of tangled and interwoven good and evil which ever spring about us from the soil of earth, and even enter into the very sinews of man's heart and brain. And yet when we ask ourselves, Is it good to be alive and to burn with quenchless desire, with love half-realised and with purpose ever imperfectly fulfilled? the incarnate heart of Deity in ourselves responds, with the smile of daybreak, that the spirits which discern and divide and contend in labour and agony, are but glimpses of the Great Light that shall unite and heal in strength and tenderness and joy.

THE RETURN TO EARTH

"The Tyger" has not afforded us, as it perhaps at first set out to do, a universal solution of the mystery of evil. It sets forth the hope that the sterner and more terrible manifestations of love and genius in the throes of experience, are aspects of the conquering power of the Divine Humanity. But when we look again at earth after our prophetic vision we see much left to conquer. The intellectual problem may be lessened, but it only throws into stronger relief the practical one. In the four songs with which we conclude (three of them amongst Blake's greatest), we are to meet, face to face as never before, the grim facts of man's life in society with which the earth still confronts the Tyger-Spirit of prophecy.

THE Chimney Sweeper

A little black thing among the snow:
Crying weep, weep, in notes of woe!
Where are thy father & mother? say?
They are both gone up to the church to pray.

Because I was happy upon the heath,
And smil'd among the winters snow:
They clothed me in the clothes of death,
And taught me to sing the notes of woe. .

And because I am happy, & dance & sing,
They think they have done me no injury:
And are gone to praise God & his Priest & King
Who make up a heaven of our misery.

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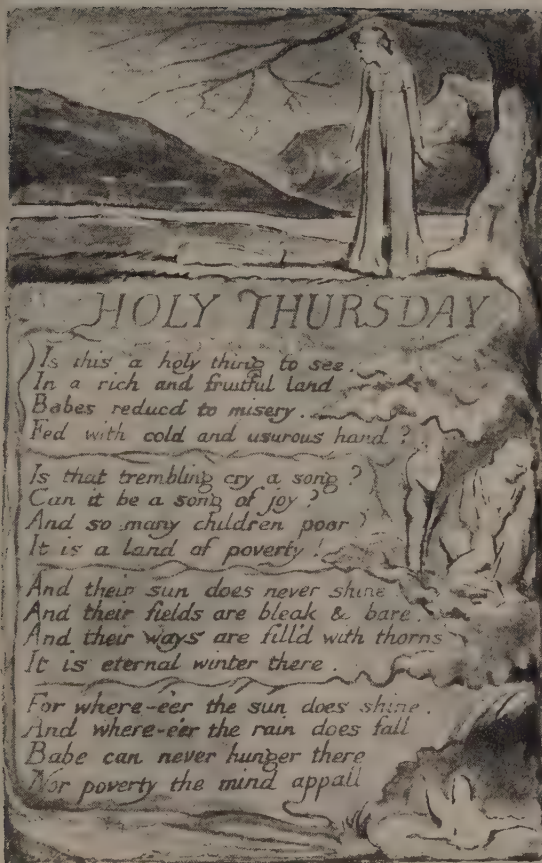
HOLY THURSDAY

Is this a holy thing to see,
In a rich and fruitful land,
Babes reduced to misery,
Fed with cold and usurous hand?

Is that trembling cry a song?
Can it be a song of joy?
And so many children poor?
It is a land of poverty!

And their sun does never shine.
And their fields are bleak & bare.
And their ways are fill'd with thorns
It is eternal winter there.

For where-e'er the sun does shine,
And where-e'er the rain does fall:
Babe can never hunger there,
Nor poverty the mind appall.



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And where-e'er the rain does fall,
Babe can never hunger there,
Nor poverty the mind appall.

THE CHIMNEY SWEEPER

THIS is the simplest of the social poems of "Experience." The first verse was not written at the same time as the second and third, which are written to a different rhyme scheme.

The mood is characteristic of the disillusionment of Experience and embraces in its attack, parents, Church, God, priest, king and their conception of heaven, omitting to mention only the "soldier" so frequently in Blake's mind. But though it was no doubt sincere and is even not overstated—for there *is* something rotten in the spiritual and material complacency that is undisturbed by the misery of society's substructure—yet it was less effective for its purpose than "The Chimney Sweeper" of "Innocence." That was a poem entirely without bitterness, and left the moral to the readers' own reason and conscience. It was used even during Blake's lifetime as propaganda, and was no doubt the germ of Kingsley's "Water Babies."

HOLY THURSDAY

THIS and the "London" are among the most tremendous of Blake's prophetic utterances. Prophetic as they are, they show Blake in his most human mood. He cannot contain his indignation or hide his compassion. His description of the charity children entering St Paul's was perhaps the very first of his "Songs of Innocence," and this is nearly the last of his "Songs of Experience."¹ It tells us what a distance his mind has travelled in the intervening years. His vision of the Divine-humanity drives him to look *within* at what seemed so fair *without*. In the minds of the children he finds bleak tragedy, which he expresses in the third verse by metaphors that carry us back to "Innocence" with devastating contrast. Oh what a land! that sees itself rich and fruitful and yet can endure such drear winter in the hearts of its children. It is no land of wealth, but of a poverty that is deep disgrace. Is it not we, the prosperous of earth, that live spiritually in a land without sun or rain, if there can be among us any babe who suffers hunger or neglect?

The illustration is among the most beautiful and powerful. The exquisite beauty of the lake and hills where the girl discovers a dead babe upon the grass; the pathos of the weeping boy, and the clinging child, where the mother turns her head away with no comfort to give; and the corpse upon the symbolic leaf below; all speak the wealth of Blake's compassionate mind. *His* soul was no "land of poverty."

¹ "The Angel" and "The Fly" were the only ones written later in the MS.

The School Boy

I love to rise in a summer morn,
When the birds sing on every tree;
The distant huntsman winds his horn,
And the sky-lark sings with me.
O! what sweet company.

But to go to school in a summer morn,
O! it drives all joy away;
Under a cruel eye outworn,
The little ones spend the day,
In sighing and dismay.

Ah! then at times I drooping sit,
And spend many an anxious hour,
Nor in my book can I take delight,
Nor sit in learnings bower,
Worn thro' with the dreary shower.

How can the bird that is born for joy,
Sit in a cage and sing.
How can a child when fears annoy,
But droop his tender wing,
And forget his youthful spring.

O! father & mother, if buds are nip'd,
And blossoms blown away,
And if the tender plants are strip'd
Of their joy in the springing day,
By sorrow and cares dismay,

How shall the summer arise in joy,
Or the summer fruits appear.
Or how shall we gather what griefs destroy
Or bless the mellowing year,
When the blasts of winter appear.

The School Boy

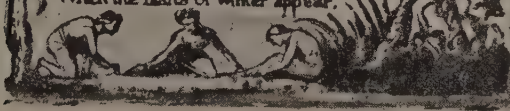
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And blossoms blown away,
And if the tender plants are strip'd
Of their joy in the springing day,
By sorrow and cares destroy'd.

How shall the summer arise in joy,
Or the summer fruits appear,
Or how shall we gather what grows des-
Or bless the mellowing year,
When the blasts of winter appear.



THE SCHOOL BOY

THIS beautiful poem was originally written for "Innocence," but its note of protest served to bring it into the mood of "Experience." It is, however, without the bitterness with which kindred themes are treated in "Experience," and this makes it one of the most effective and enduring of all Blake's prophetic protests. It may be regarded as setting forth Innocence as the fundamental basis of Experience, as "The Blossom" shows Experience as the crown of Innocence. It fitly closes for us a book which is one long plea for the beauty and freedom of youth.

The first verse with matchless economy and music conjures a vision for us of early summer morning.

When the quatrain was finished and the lovely picture complete—the light, the sound, the trees, the distance and the lark—an unpremeditated line of lyric chorus seems to burst from the poet's heart as he dwells on the theme he has conjured to mind:

O! what sweet company.

So the wise inspiration to include the comment in the verse was followed; and the consequent form was continued with equal success throughout the poem. Against this lovely opening scene as background, is thrown the dreary picture of the school-room, oppressive and pallid, purposely lengthened to two verses to give time for the impression of tedious and anxious hours. Again the added line doubles the effect of each whole verse.

Then comes the apt comparison with the caged bird, none the less appealing for the fact that caged birds are often songful enough.

The last two verses form a single sentence of sustained and eloquent appeal to parents, in which the metaphor of the "youthful spring" is developed in great beauty and truth. The poem is winged on reason, not upon scorn and indignation. May it become—as it deserves—ever more widely heard and more wisely marked. England would be sweeter and stronger in the strength and sweetness of its childhood were it so.

A DIVINE IMAGE

[There is a poem appended here that Blake etched but never printed, and which is therefore not expressive of Blake's mind, though it is very characteristic of his craft. Vide supra, p. 176.]

A DIVINE IMAGE

Cruelty has a Human Heart
And Jealousy a Human Face
Terror the Human Form Divine
And Secrecy the Human Dress

The Human Dress is forged Iron
The Human Form a fiery Forge
The Human Face a Furnace seald
The Human Heart its hungry Gorge]

TAILPIECE

A BEAUTIFUL plate without text here reproduced concludes the Carey copy and certain other early ones which omit "To Tirzah." It represents the same theme in the lyrical vein of "Innocence" rather than "Experience." It is the figure of Youth borne aloft by cherubs, and is undoubtedly symbolic of the ascent of Innocence, or the regeneration of Earth¹—for we must always end on Albion's Rocky Shore, and it is no "allegorical abode" but this very world that must be redeemed.

Before entering upon our study of the MSS. where we shall find something of even more absorbing interest than Blake's handicraft, because we shall be watching the great smith himself labouring at the furnaces in sweat and sometimes in agony—let us make an attempt to sum up his system of thought so far as he has developed it. In later years and works he is to develop his system in fuller and more complete symbolism, but the main structural lines of his thought are now laid down. It is still essentially twofold although already clearly destined to become fourfold—and it is already something moving not static. Put into its simplest general form it is that Thought must become humanised and that Instinct or Love must become liberated.

But these are all later developments which cannot be fully gone into here. What concerns us in this book is two themes expressed in two different passages in "Jerusalem," both already very familiar to the reader of the foregoing, but both now more possible to expound. The first is "O holy Generation Image of regeneration," and the other is "All things Begin & End in Albions Ancient Druid Rocky Shore."

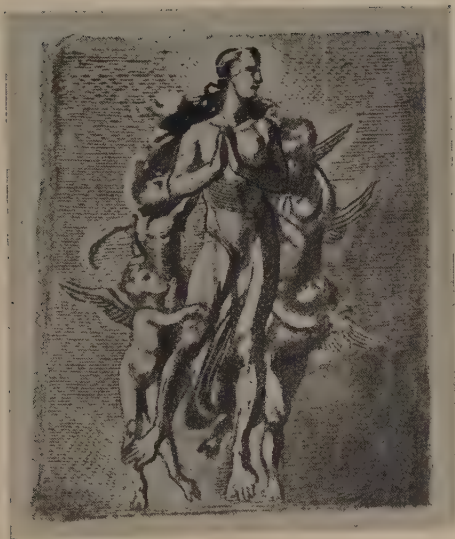
¹ This is, as Mr Keynes observes, an Androgynous figure, symbolising the reunion of the two elements of Man.

The moment of Generation was for Blake the burying of a joy that broke for very ecstasy in tears in the dark chasm of the womb, where it lay for countless ages of moments in silence and repeated tribulations, to return at last into day and joy, less ecstatic it may be, but still more enduring than the darkness.

This, which was what happened on earth and in the flesh was the perfect image of the great adventure of the Soul. Entering this life from Eternity and still glowing in infancy with innocent delight, it becomes deeply immersed in the darkness and tangle of Experience, wherein it is moulded to a more enduring fitness for the Infinite and Eternal love and joy that may be found even upon this "Rocky Shore."

We may, therefore, see this shore of Albion in either of two ways. We may see it as painted in the picture of "The Blossom," the symbol of generation with its upper and lower branches and the round complete between them—or we may see it on a nobler scale, but in a similar form, as Joy passing through the darkness and tribulation of Experience to spiritual beatitude. This is illustrated by the design to "The Divine Image." There Christ stands at the root of life whence man and woman emerge, to point them through the darkness that the flaming tree of life must penetrate till it lifts them into a realm of light and angelic presences while its roots remain ever in this world.

I think we shall certainly be right if we say that the Lamb and the Tyger illustrate the same theme. The Lamb is the supreme moment of spiritual Innocence ; it is Joy, and joy can never be destroyed. Plunged into the dark womb of Experience it reveals itself as a flaming and terrific power mighty to emerge at last into a greater day. But the two are manifestations of the same Eternal Smile, the smile of Being.



PART III

THE MS. OF EXPERIENCE

Much of Blake's MS. was clearly not intended for publication. But since editors have now published it without reserve, it has become of great importance to examine and criticise its crucial portions frankly and unreservedly

THE MANUSCRIPTS

- i. Three pages from "An Island in the Moon."

(*Vide supra*, pp. 44-47, and *infra*, p. 284.)

- ii. Seventeen pages from the "Rossetti Manuscript."

No 10 let us play for it is yet day
And we cannot ~~not~~ sleep ~~the night~~
~~the night is so dark and cold~~
Beside the sky the little birds fly
And the meadows are covered with sheep

Will Will go & play till the light fades away
And then go home to bed
The little ones leaped & shouted & laughed
And all the hills echoed

Then ~~the night came~~ ~~the night came~~ and sunny Sunday

O father father where are you going
O do not walk so fast.
O speak father speak to your little son
Or else I shall be lost

The night it was dark & no father was there
And the child was wet with dew
The mire was deep & the child did weep
And away the vapour flew

Here nobody could sing any longer. till Tilly Lally plucked up a
spirit & began.

O I say you Jags
Throw us the ball
I've a good mind to go
And leave you all
I never saw such a bowler
To bowl the ball in a ~~round~~ ~~round~~
And to clean it with my handkercher
Without saying a word

That Belle a foolish fellow
~~He has given me a black eye~~
He has given me a black eye
He does not know how to handle a bat
Any more than a ~~dog~~ ~~cat~~ cat
He has knocked down the wicket
And broke the stumps
And runs without shoes to save his pumps

Here a laugh began and Miss Littipie say

Leave I leave to my sorrows
Here I'll sit & fade away
Till I'm nothing but a spirit
And lose this form of clay

then. Illuminating the Manuscript - Ay said she that would
be excellent. then said he I would have all the writing engraved
instead of Printed & at every other ~~Chapter~~ leaf a high finished
print all in three Volumes folio, & sell them a hundred pounds
a piece, they would print off two thousand then said she whom
will not have them will be ignorant folk & will not deserve to live
Dont you think I have something of the Goats face says he. Very
like a Goats face - she answered - I think your face said he is like
that noble beast the Tiger - Oh I was at Mrs Sickenbarns & I
was speaking of my abilities, but their nasty hearts poor devils
are eat up with envy - they envy me my abilities, I all the Women
envy your abilities my dear they hate people who are
of higher abilities than their nasty filthy ~~low~~ selves but do you
out face them I then Strangers will see you have an opinion - now
I think we should do as much good as we can when we are at
Mr Fernaldes's do ye say & take me up - and I will fall into such
a passion I'll howl and stamp & frighten all the People there I show
them what truth is - at this Instant Otter Angle came in Oh I am
glad you are come said quid

THE MANUSCRIPTS

THE manuscript of "An Island in the Moon," in which a few of the "Songs of Innocence" were written, has already been dealt with in the Preface (pp. 44 ff.). Photographs of three pages are here reproduced.

The "Songs of Experience" are mostly found in the "Rossetti Manuscript," as it has been called, which was originally a sketch-book. It was procured by D. G. Rossetti in 1847, and was very carefully described by Dr Sampson in 1905. It is the book in which Blake made a large number of drawings, many belonging to a series from which his "Gates of Paradise" were to be afterwards selected. Towards the end he appears to have turned the book round and made several drawings across instead of down the page, sometimes making use of the two pages for one design. One day he wrote a little poem in the corner of the page already used for sketches. It was at the reverse end of the book where the cross-drawn sketches occur. He had, in fact, turned the book upside down, and begun at the other end, avoiding, probably, at first, space used or reserved for the sketches, but gradually, as the verses interested him more, he became more indifferent to anything else on the page. Nevertheless, the eight or nine double pages used for this series of poems contain one or two of Blake's very finest drawings; others are nearly obliterated, but probably all had a definite relation to the poems. We must suppose them either to have been suggested by the poems and drawn subsequently, or to have had some effect in suggesting them.

There are about sixty little poems written in this way, all of which are closely connected, sometimes obviously by a word occurring in the previous poem, such as "angel" or "chapel," sometimes by an absorbing thought, such as the pains of earthly love, or the

oppressiveness of this unnatural and man-made world. Blake had not yet reached the position that "Nature" was the source of all error and "Man" the source of all good, though we see him working towards it.

But this kind of connectedness in the poems and verselets is not their greatest interest. One cannot read them without being struck by the constant and even periodic references to day and night, to sleep, darkness, dreams, and love—to love's opportunities and disappointments—to daybreak and morning vigour, to the fertility of thought and passion, and, always near, is the over-shadowing oppression of a city ridden by conventions. These drive the poetry of life, and love, that belongs by right to a world of gardens, and wild flowers, and cornfields, to seek cover in the obscurity of close and curtained chambers, and to the protection of things as hard and comfortless as law and churches of stone. They are songs of disillusionment and revolt, largely directed against the bonds with which love is surrounded, but with a strong personal and intimate origin.

Blake had not long been established in his own house and garden across the Thames.¹ Busy all day with his somewhat monotonous professional work, it was the evenings, the nights, and the early mornings, that gave opportunity to that pen and pencil which were his passport into Paradise. But this life of labour by day, and of love and art by night, meant the eternal separation of the two most glorious things for him in the life of man. Summer suns, set in blue skies, and shadowed by green leaves on the green grass, could never look upon the twofold human form divine in "naked beauty displayed." It was a poor poet, as it seemed to Blake, who could be content with the draught-blown lights of candles, or dim midnight lamps, when looking at the image of God. Poor hunted child of Paradise that he was, he

¹ Hercules Buildings was quite near the Thames on the south side. Its back bedroom windows must have looked over gardens to open fields and the distant Surrey hills.

played Adam and Eve (we are told) with his wife in the little suburban garden, to the vulgarly amused scandal of his eighteenth century visitors, and of all those who for a hundred years have paid afternoon calls upon his genius; but he made a swift sketch in his notebook of the male and female form divine, that puts every poetic mind deeply in his debt.

In the analysis of this remarkable human document, the critic must necessarily take risks. That it was personal and episodic is certain. It may be impossible to say finally "at this point Blake lays down his pen and goes to bed; at this point he sat up and described the dawn; at this point he is reconciled with his wife and with marriage, and his wrath turns against society, while his own sorrows give place to the sorrows of mankind." But there can be little doubt that all these things were at that time happening; and as we read the manuscript we seem frequently to be able to guess the very moment when the fresh morning air comes through the opened window, or the clouds dull the splendours of the breaking day. We seem to be able to go with him in his walks abroad on the Thames-side or through London's dingy streets, and to return with him to his own house and garden.

The historian is dependent upon tangible things left by the past; worked stones or yellow papers; or painted walls and canvas; and he must not reconstruct what these contradict. But the stones and papers are not history. This can only rise and live with the aid of the living imagination, and every reader of the past must in the end have recourse to his own imagination to see into the life of other days. We know that Blake was living when his magic touch gave such manifold life to the pages of this little book, and we must each put our own life, even at the risk of mis-shaping his, into the lines he traced for us. So my account of the manuscript book, while closely following lines actually existing on the page, will make ventures of

speculation in full recognition of the necessity for others to make other speculations and reconstructions.

There are, however, certain outstanding facts which every student must take account of. One of the most striking of these is the fact that sixteen of the twenty-two songs written before "The Tyger" are written in the first person, and eleven of these begin with "I," whereas out of the twenty-nine poems and fragments written after "The Tyger," there are only eight or nine in the first person, and only two beginning with "I." It is clear that the composition of this great poem registers (perhaps effects) a change in Blake's mind, and there are other not less crucial turning points to be found, and scarcely less incontrovertible.

The poem which opens the series is nearly the same as "My Pretty ROSE TREE" in "Experience," but a few deletions and emendations give it additional interest.

This first double page of the manuscript is indeed packed with interest of many kinds. Note the careful divisions, horizontal and vertical, to separate the poems. These follow the text, showing that they were put in afterwards, and revealing the corrections made after the poem had been considered finished. Much is to be learnt from them, but meanwhile certain other things need noting. Several of the poems have pencil scores right down the centre as though to delete them. It is difficult to be sure what these were for.

Probably Blake put a line through the manuscript when he had engraved a song in "Experience," but there are three or four songs of "Experience" not so deleted, and others which do *not* appear elsewhere *were* deleted; because (I feel sure) he did not wish them to stand. But in neither case do they much concern our particular study, the purpose of which is to get a moving picture of Blake's thought during the brief moment of his life when these songs followed—probably in rapid succession—from the working sea of his mind.

We must next try to picture the pages before they were written on. Some may have contained sketches, afterwards rubbed out: most, I think, were blank, and perhaps all. But even so I feel sure Blake still thought of the book at first as a sketch-book with notes round the margins, and it was only as the poetic ideas of this great creative episode more and more possessed his mind, that he came to sacrifice first one page and then another entirely or almost entirely to MS., and finally to write verses over the sketches.

These sketches are in themselves among the most remarkable things Blake has left us. Whether they were suggested by the poems, or the poems by them, they are closely connected in thought. But the most striking thing about them is the new quality in Blake's genius they reveal. Hitherto we have seen Blake as a master of the diminutive. His three little tractates are attempts to concentrate into the space of a dozen large postage stamps, the core of all philosophy, illustrated by vision. His "Gates of Paradise" epitomise the tale of man and his earth, with its heights and depths, in a score of briefly annotated little pictures. His "Songs of Innocence" are small in size and intimate in character. And the previous sketches in this book are mainly small, and never large at once in design and meaning. But at this end of the sketch-book Blake seems to have won a new liberty, both of mind and hand. He has suddenly achieved grandeur of conception, and an occasional mastery of draughtsmanship, which he seldom or never succeeds in retaining in his finished work, but which never leaves him with his pencil. The grandeur reappears in the "Europe" and "America," but was almost finally killed by the treacherous limitations of the opportunity he thought he had found in the designs for Young's "Night Thoughts." His consummate draughtsmanship is at its best in some of the "Vala" sketches and the illustrations to Dante.¹

¹ The above was written before I had seen Mr Keynes's "Pencil Drawings by William Blake" (Nonesuch), which unfortunately does not include any of the sketches in the

Nevertheless, those peculiar qualities of nobility of vision, and poetry of line, which are so distinctive of Blake's greatest work, seem to break forth at this moment in two or three sketches associated with a series of lyrics that alone would have secured his place among the English masters. It is impossible not to speculate as to what had happened and whether some new influence had not invaded his peace, and stirred his genius to new fire and liberty. It is improbable that the speculation will ever become anything more. But its interest will serve to make us examine the MS. with a scrutiny which must in the end prove its own justification.¹

ENTRIES

I. The entries clearly begin with "A flower was offerd to me." This is startlingly different from anything Blake had written either in the "Poetical Sketches" or in "Innocence." The wild personal note in a few of the "Sketches" is revived, without their crudeness, while the free lyrical note of the "Songs" is as rich as ever.

The change is so marked as to require explanation, and I cannot regard the poem as other than the record of an episode; the origin of the flood-tide of poetic inspiration which these pages register. It is therefore worth more than a cursory examination.

In the first place, Blake with all his genius and eternal wisdom

Dante Series. Some impression of these, however, may be got from the Plates 79 and 80, from the Book of Enoch, which are evidently contemporary with the Dante.

¹ My best critic tells me that he considers some of the preceding pages of this Introduction to the MS. the least satisfactory in the book. I suppose it is no accident that the passages one felt most compelled to write should often be least pleasing to others. For the attempt to solve one's own problems sometimes merely raises them in the mind of one's reader. But throughout this part of the book I cannot too strongly insist that my purpose is first and foremost to challenge investigation. I could not possibly hope to find a final solution for all the difficulties presented by the MS. What seemed to me necessary was to leave no obvious problem unattempted.

was a simple and impulsive child of nature, brought up in a Nonconformist and somewhat Puritanic home. To me there seems scarcely a page of his early work that does not reveal him as having lived in child-like innocence before marriage, and in child-like ecstasy for the first years after. I do not doubt that he continued to accept marriage at its face value even after his mind had learnt to entertain the revolutionary suggestions of the rationalistic and antinomian circles he came to mingle in. Sooner or later, there was bound to come some episode which waked him, not in mind only, but in imagination, to the fact that marriage was a convention, and I have come to believe that this whole section of the manuscript is the record of a fierce and epoch-making struggle in Blake's mind to free the workings of the Holy Spirit from all convention, without falling into the yawning pit which worship of the senses seemed to offer as the only obvious alternative.

This poem may be the record of the shock. Blake had 'turned down' some advance, possibly of a 'free spirit' he had encountered in the literary or revolutionary circles he met in London, or possibly some much more casual love advance. But in either case it was for a mind like his no trivial happening. Across his path there strode that day the dread and universal power that wrought the destruction of Ilium, and yet in the mystery of things and days brought forth the *Iliad*. A new epoch had dawned for him: the epoch of Experience. Yet when he came home to share this Epic passion with his wife—with none other could it be shared—he was to discover that for her it closed the era of their lyric love in Innocence. It is easy to sympathise with the bitter sense of disappointment that followed for them both. To Blake it seemed as though his wife wished to make merely personal to herself a Power mighty and universal as Creation itself. To her it seemed as if he was deserting the only thing that makes love Love.

The poem itself gives only the faint hint of all this, but perhaps reveals the hinge upon which the great Gate now opens in distraction and pain, that was finally to lead through bleak tribulation and stormy triumph into all serenity.

A flower was offerd to me
Such a flower as may never bore
But I said Ive a pretty rose tree
And I passed the sweet flower oer

Then I went to my pretty rose tree
In the silent of the night¹
But my rose was turned from me²
And her thorns were my only delight

For some time after this Blake writes of marriage as a device of those who hate Joy, and it is only when he sees it again as the ally of Joy that he is reconciled.

II. There can, I think, be no doubt that Blake was writing primarily to "get rid" of something on his mind, and after he has told his story he begins to think about it. Was it not folly, after all, to *ask* for love? To do so is only to court rebuff. Love should be no matter for speech but of instinct, which wins its way without words:

Never seek³ to tell thy love
Love that never told can be
For the gentle wind does move
Silently invisibly

¹ *Later*, To tend it by day & by night.

² *Later*, for "was turned" "was filld with Jealousy", and finally "turnd away with Jealousy".

³ Subsequently "seek" was altered to "pain" before the verse was finally deleted.

But the personal note is not yet silenced, and it rings out again in the next verse, which is really another version of the rebuff in the "Rose Tree":

I told my love I told my love
I told her all my heart
Trembling cold in ghastly fears
Ah she doth [did] depart

Then he seems to have drawn a line, and when he continues, it is on a new theme, developing that of the first verse, which he had now perhaps deleted. Love can have its way if gesture and instinct are trusted instead of the clumsiness of speech:

Soon as she was gone from me
A traveller came by
Silently invisibly
He took her with a sigh

(later, to correspond with "Ah she did depart," he substituted for the last line, "O was no deny").

III. He now makes a more resolute and objective attempt to be philosophical. The pain of his heart passes into a protective hardness in his mind. Love, after all, is often a very selfish and grasping thing. We may sentimentalise about its softness and kindness, but it is often nothing but a fierce appetite full of hardness and cruelty.

Love seeketh not itself to please
Nor for itself hath any care
But for another gives its ease
And builds a heaven in hells despair

So sung a little clod of clay
Trodden with the cattles feet
But a pebble of the brook
Warbled out these metres meet

Love seeketh only self to please
 To bind another to its delight
 Joys in anothers loss of ease
 And builds a hell in heavens despite

IV. Let us now fancy (it is a speculation, but for the moment let us yield to it) that the labours of the day were finished and Blake sat by the window, where the crescent moon (referred to) was nearing the horizon, and, thinking deeply of his wife already sleeping on the bed—thinking of their late misunderstanding and of her grief—he writes, up in the top right-hand corner of the double page (avoiding at first the sketch and leaving room for one on the first page)¹:

Sleep Sleep; in thy sleep
 Thou wilt every secret keep
 Sleep Sleep beauty bright
 Thou shalt taste the joys of night

But “joys of night” suggesting something more conscious than sleep, he changes the last line to:

Dreaming oer the joys of night

The line “Dreaming oer the joys of night” accords less well than he would wish with his Kate’s sleep of sorrow, betrayed in spite of her quiet beauty, and he first deletes the second line, substituting for: ‘Thou wilt every secret keep’:

Canst thou any secret keep

¹ A difficulty will occur here to the critical reader. If Blake wrote up in this corner to avoid the sketch, why did he begin so far from the margin? The answer is, I think, simple. He had been writing verses of which the long lines extended about three inches from his margin, so that in beginning a new poem he automatically leaves three inches, though the line in his mind (if already formed) was shorter. But this he would not have been so likely to do if the first column of this page had already been written, for at the foot the verses claim more room than this “Sleep, Sleep” poem would safely allow.

(not at all events from him); and then deleting that, too, he writes above it a wonderful line alongside the first, so that the poem now opens:

Sleep sleep; in thy sleep
Little sorrows sit & weep

Then (or, perhaps, before these emendations) he begins a second verse. Looking out at the calm landscape, he writes:

Yet a little while the moon(?)
Silent . . .

But with the sinking of the moon, inspiration flags and he never completed what might have been one of the tenderest and most intimate of all his lyrics (*cp.* "Night" and "The Evening Star").

The next verse was, as I think, written before he had decided to make a Cradle Song of it, as there is no definite reference to a babe; and since he speaks of "smiles as of the morning," the lines may belong to the next day:

As thy softest limbs I touch [*then* "stroke" and *finally* "feel"]
Smiles as of the morning look [*perhaps* "broke" and *finally* "steal"]
Oer thy cheek & oer thy breast
Where thy little heart does rest

It was then I think that a new idea came to him, and he started a little lower down to write a Cradle Song, leaving space to continue the other theme if necessary. This Cradle Song verse is a new departure. For the first time Blake definitely sets out to parody, or supplement, a Song of "Innocence":

2 Sweet Babe in thy face
Soft desires I can trace
Secret joys & secret smiles
Such as burning youth bequiles.

He then probably continued below with the first line of another verse, subsequently obliterated:

O the cunning wiles that creep

But he decides that this belongs to the first idea, and he returns to crowd in the verse above the Cradle Song verse:

4 O the cunning wiles that creep
 In thy little heart asleep
 When thy little heart does wake
 Then the dreadful lightnings break

Now, separating off the Cradle Song verse with horizontal lines above and below, he writes a final verse which he first intended to belong to the earlier theme (his wife's sleep, now perhaps become more general as "female sleep"), but it was afterwards altered to fit the later theme, and the word "Infant" is twice substituted for the word "Female" in the third line, to make it belong to the Cradle Song:

5 From thy cheek & from thy eye
 Oer the youthful harvests nigh
 Female [*then* Infant] wiles & female [*then* infant] smiles
 Heaven & Earth of peace beguiles

This last line is a masterly inversion of the beautiful last line of the Cradle Song in "Innocence": "Heaven & earth to peace beguiles."

He had probably already numbered the lines of the first verse, but he now proceeds to number the verses, putting the number of verse "one" above the line, and making the "Cradle Song" verse second. At the same time, probably, he softened the last line of this to: "little pretty infant wiles." Last of all perhaps he added the title, well to the right, so as to avoid the figure "1."

After I was offered to me
Such a flower as many never bore
But I said I'm a pretty rose tree
And I passed the sweet flower over

They I went to my little rose tree
To spend a day, a night
In the silent of the night
But my rose was turned to a thorn
And her thorns were my only delight

~~Never ^{again} to tell the story
Love that never told can be
For the gentle wind does move
viciously, unceasingly~~

I told my love I told my love
Told her all my heart
Trembling with a ghastly fear
At the dark despair

Soon as she was gone from me
A traveller came by
Slightly whispering I was no longer
~~the same as before~~

Love seeks to be shut to please
Not for itself but for my care
is it for another's eye, it can
And build a tower in hell's despair

To sing a little word of clay
Tied with the cattle feet
But a pebble of the loath
Was it these matters meet

Love seeks to be only self to please
To bind another to its delight
To give in another's life of ease
And build a hell in heaven's light

Laid me down upon a bank
Where I lay sleeping
I heard among the rushes, dark
Weeping weeping
Then I went to the heart of the wood
To the thistles & thorns of the waste
And they told me how they were beyond
I was out & compelled to be chaste

I went to the garden of love
And I saw what I never had seen
A chapel was built in the midst
Where I used to play on the green
And the gates of the chapel were shut
And there shall not write over the door
And I turned to the garden of love
That so many sweet flowers bore
And I saw it was filled with graves
And tomb stones where flowers should be
And fresh in black grounds were written the
And looking with tears, my joy & despair

I saw a chapel all of gold
That none did dare to enter in
And many weeping stood without
Weeping mourning, weeping
I saw a serpent on the tower
The white pillars of the door
And he forced & forced & forced
Till he broke the ~~door~~ ^{down the glass}

And also of the government's seat
Set with pearls & rubies bright
All his Army length he drew
Till upon the altar white

Donning his purple robe
In the blood & on the crown
So I turned into a dog
And laid me down among the stones

asked a thief ^{to} steal me a peach
and he turned up his eyes
asked a little lady to lie her down
and Holy & much she cries
soon as I went an angel came
and he winked at the thief
and he winked at the dame
and without one word of her said
and a peach from the tree
and I took it and ate it and still a maid
enjoyed the lady

and an Angel sang
the day was springing
every Peep & Peal
the world's release

as he sang all day
as the sun morn'g ray
all the sun went down
and haycocks looked brown
and a Devil came
of the health & the fange
my could be no more
there was nobody poor

fully no more could be
all were as happy as we
as the sun went down
the heavens gave a frown
and I found the heavy rain
the new reaped grain

and I found the heavy rain
the new reaped grain
and I found the heavy rain
the new reaped grain
and I found the heavy rain
the new reaped grain

^{A lovely song}
Sleep, Sleep, in thy sleep
and the world every second sleep
Sleep, Sleep, brightly bright
and the world every second sleep
Dreaming over the joys of night
and the world every second sleep
As thy softest looks I find
as of the morning dew still
for thy cheek & over thy breast
when thy little heart does rest
O the way only that ever
in thy little heart does rest
when thy little heart does rest
Thy sweet heart in thy face
soft smiles I see
Sweet joy & sweet love
Sweet heart in thy face
Sweet heart in thy face

From thy smile & from thy eye
For the gentlest fragrance
Sweet heart in thy face
Sweet heart in thy face

I was angry with my friends
I told my wrath my wrath did end
I was angry with my foe
I told it not my wrath did grow

And I watered it with tears
Night & morn'g with my tears
And I sowed it with barley
And with soft deceitful wiles
And it grew by day & night
Till it bore an apple bright

And my foe bit it
And he knew that it was mine

And into my garden stole
When the night had veiled the pole
In the morning glad I see
My foe outbroke beneath the tree

V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X

We now enter upon a new phase. The next six poems and one on the next page all begin with "I," and the two that follow are also in the first person. The first six are vividly narrative in form and built on obviously symbolic imagery. Blake is still feeling bitter, and his feelings are still personal, but with the return of daylight he can now convert this bitterness into more objective imagery and parable. The inner theme of these poems is the central theme of the series: Can the marriage convention ever meet the poet's demand for freedom, and if not, are we to go over to the sensualists?

V. The first poem seems closely connected with the last (before it was converted to a cradle song), but Blake's bed of the night before has become a symbolic "bank":

I laid me down upon a bank
Where love lay sleeping
I heard among the rushes dank
Weeping Weeping

What food is there for the spirit in that sorrowful bed of dank, disappointed, earthly love? And then he turns to the other side of the picture. If this is marriage, what about the desolate and thorny souls whom the marriage convention excludes, and condemns to celibacy?

Then I went to the heath & the wild
To the thistles & thorns of the waste
And they told me how they were beguiled
Driven out & compelled to be chaste

VI. Then he turns from the waste to the garden. Surely the early vision of love's perfect poetry is not everywhere falsified? But

even innocence is now seen as robbed of its flowers by a man-made erection of decorum and its freedom hedged by the thorns of convention.

I went to the garden of love
And I saw what I never had seen
A chapel was built in the midst
Where I used to play on the green

And the gates of the chapel were shut
And thou shalt not writ over the door
And [*later in pencil*, So] I turnd to the garden of love
That so many sweet flowrs bore

And I saw it was filled with graves
And tomb-stones where flowers should be
And priests in black gounds were walking their rounds
And binding with briars my joys & desires

VII. The chapel now suggests a bolder metaphor, and it becomes the sanctuary of the love of woman, which it should be a lover's joy to enter in worship.¹ In boldly phallic imagery he now pictures the priest possessing this holy place and polluting it with something as utterly alien to it as legal and ecclesiastical convention is to love and passion and poetry. In disgust he then turns to associate himself with the frankly bestial, who are at least, one might suppose, free from *that* desecration.

Blake very generally uses the Serpent to symbolise the Priesthood. The actual significance of the symbol is the power that takes upon itself to intervene between God and Man, as in the Garden of Eden.

¹ In Night Third of the Vala MS. there is a sketch of a nude woman with an altar-piece representing her "Secret Place" (*vide* "Jerusalem," 69⁴⁴); the central panel shows a tall figure and the two wings are thrown open.

It therefore sometimes symbolises Nature, and sometimes, I think, the whole Time-process.¹

I saw a chapel all of gold
That none did dare to enter in
And many weeping stood without
Weeping mourning worshipping.

I saw a serpent rise between
The white pillars of the door
And he forcd & forcd & forcd
Till he broke the pearly door
(*Later*, "Down the golden hinges tore")

And along the pavement sweet
Set with pearls & rubies bright
All his slimy length he drew
Till upon the altar white

Vomiting his poison out
On the bread & on the wine
So I turnd into a sty
And laid me down among the swine.

VIII. But among thieves and harlots he is to find little better fortune. Supposing in all innocence that they have revolted on principle, as he has, he proposes to join their brotherhood only to find them assuming hypocritical allegiance to the same law as the conventionalists. They are in fact really swine, who only transgress the law for the benefit of their own personal lusts.

¹ *Cp.* Entry XIII, p. 232: "Like a serpent in the night," etc. *Cp.* also, "And the vast form of Nature like a serpent playd before them," "Jerusalem," 29⁷⁶, and a similar phrase four lines below. In certain illustrations the serpent is suggestive of "Time"; *cp.* especially the painting of the "Temptation of Eve."

I asked a thief to steal¹ me a peach
 [And] He turned up his eyes
 I asked a lithe lady to lie her down
 [And] Holy & meek she cries

This incidentally introduces the theme of the second poem on the page, the futility of speech in matters of passion. To speak is to court rebuff by something stronger than speech. The angel introduced in the next verse knows better and replies to gesture by gesture. The upturned eyes of the thief are answered by a wink, and the tears of the lady by a smile, which quickly procure his will.

But there is more in it than this. Angels in Blake's system seem to be of so many characters that we are prepared to read the poem as showing that the high professor of piety was nothing but the arch hypocrite among men. But if we remember that Blake's angels are emanations of men's minds, black or white, mighty or sentimental, as the case may be, we shall realise that this angel is almost certainly an inspiration of the poet himself, and that the element of mischief is entirely hurtless. The angel is the poet when he follows his own light, which is neither the priest's nor the sensualist's. Then he possesses all good things in this world, without injury to anyone. He leaps over the fences of the conventionalists, and at the same time rescues the bestial from their sty.

As soon as I went an angel came
 [And] He winkd at the thief
 And [he] smild at the dame
 And without one word [spoke] said
 Had a peach from the tree
 [And twixt earnest & joke] And still as a maid
 [He] Enjoyd the Lady.

It is the emendation in the penultimate line that seems finally

¹ At first "for a" (?) and then "to fetch" me a peach.

to decide the intention of the poem. But the original line probably means the same and seems intended to suggest that a happy exchange of smiles is the only bright guerdon he craves of the lady.

IX. The next poem is in a new vein. It is a morning song and perhaps begins a new day; but though the thought is fresh, it is affected by both the poems already on the page.

The Angel introduced in the last suggests the Angel here, but probably the contrast to a "Song of Innocence" suggested by the emended "Cradle Song" had a profounder influence, and Blake sets out to make a fundamental examination of a theme of Innocence. If Love is so far from the simple thing it seems, what about the other features of the Divine Image—Mercy, Pity, Peace? I think the brownness of the haycocks in the evening light is a suggestion of the innocent (vegetable) life losing its glamour.

I heard an Angel singing
When the day was springing
Mercy Pity [&] Peace
Is the worlds release

Thus he sung all day
Over the new mown hay
Till the sun went down
And haycocks looked brown

Then comes the searching criticism uttered by the "Devil," to the effect that we can only pity those in distress, and we can only be merciful to those in our power to injure, so that these virtues are the "harvest" of misery, for they could not exist without it. After many attempts to complete the poem, it was abandoned, to be taken up again (after "The Tyger"), in his poem called "The human

Image." It is noticeable that Blake does not here deal with Peace, but he explains the sinister aspect of that too in a later poem:

I heard a Devil curse
Over the heath & the furze
Mercy could be no more
If there was nobody poor

And pity no more could be
If all were as happy as we
[Thus he sang &] At his curse the sun went down
And the heavens gave a frown

Some interesting verses are here scored out containing the suggestion that bad weather, which ruins the farmers, may be what the God of Pity flourishes upon.

[And] Down pourd the heavy rain
Over the new reaped grain
And Mercy & Pity & Peace descended
The Farmers were ruined & harvest was ended

This was scored out and he began again:

And Mercy Pity & Peace
Joyd at pains¹ increase
With Poverty's Increase

Once more he tries to express the idea:

And by distress increase
Mercy Pity Peace
By Misery to increase
Mercy Pity Peace

¹ Or "their," as read by Keynes.

All these he finally rejects, and concludes the column with this couplet:

And Miseries increase
Is Mercy Pity Peace

X. In the remaining space (under the "Sleep, Sleep" song) he now writes a poem which perhaps began as a balm to his angry spirit. He had started the page in bitterness and irony against his wife. He had told her his wrath, and his wrath was immediately turned to pity for her, but into concentrated venom upon the Person or Thought that had victimised them both.

It is a poem against repression to which he added the ironic title (possibly when he gave a title to the "Cradle Song" above), "Christian forbearance":

I was angry with my friend
I told my wrath my wrath did end
I was angry with my foe
I told it not my wrath did grow

He then scored a line and continued the poem later, substantially as we find it engraved in "Experience" as "The Poison Tree":

And I watered it in fears
Night & morning with my tears
And I sunned it with smiles
And with soft deceitful wiles

And it grew by day & night
Till it bore an apple bright
[And I gave it to my foe *deleted*]
And my foe beheld it shine
And he knew that it was mine

And into my garden stole
 When the night had veild the pole
 In the morning Glad I see
 My foe outstretchd beneath the tree

XI, XII, XIII, XIV, XV

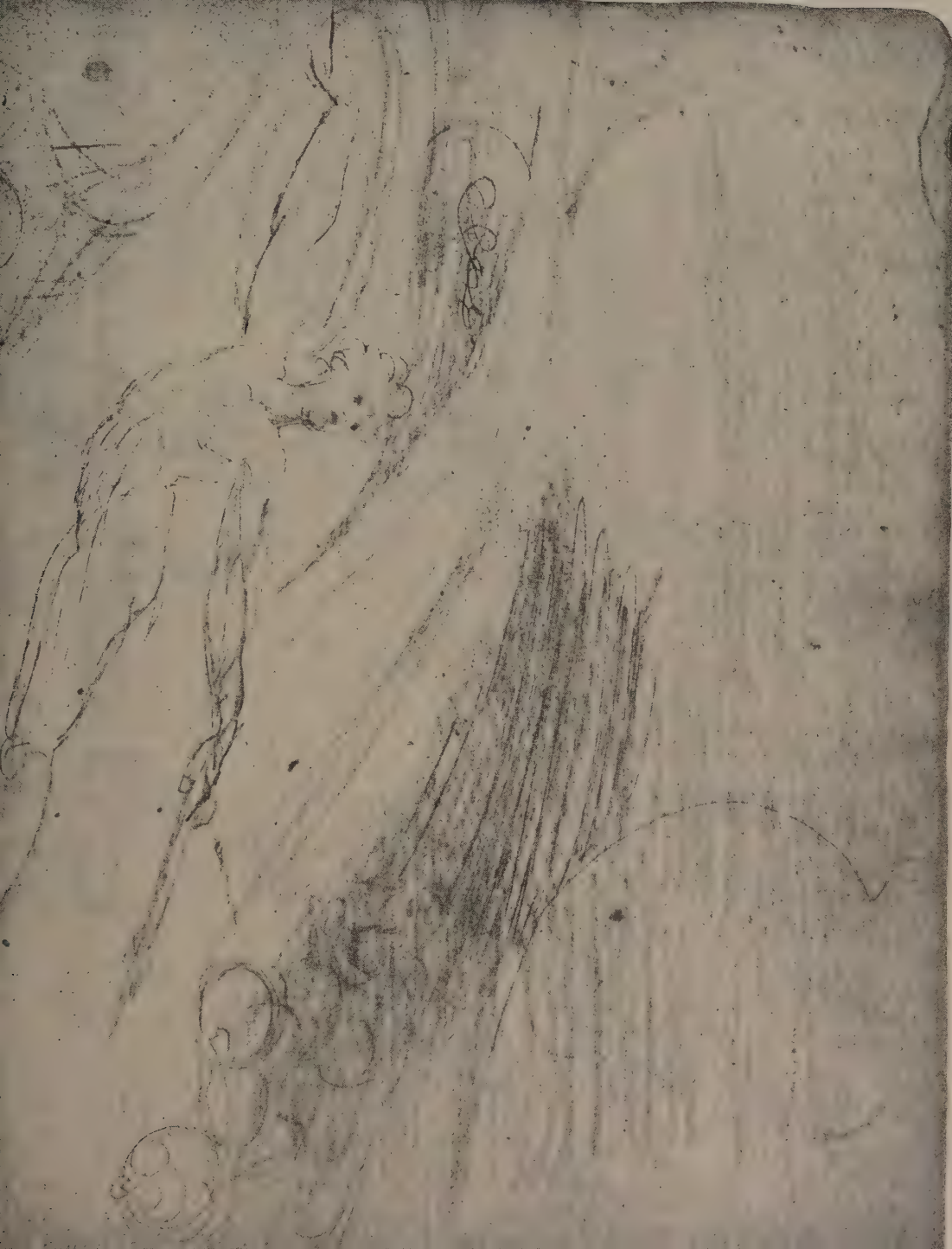
We turn over to a very interesting double page, only the left half of which is written upon. The right contains a very fine transverse sketch—perhaps of the Devil over the heath and the furze (subsequently used in the colour-print of Satan triumphing over Eve), but also probably connected with “O lapwing.”

There are no vertical lines on this page, and the poems are, on the whole, written in a smaller hand and less carefully.

XI. He now turns from the theme of the growing apple of hate to the growing blossoms of love. Surrounded as we ever are by beauty and invitations to love, he will not disturb and alarm the fair by stormy avowals, as instinct dictates; he will content himself with unclouded smiles like the sun's and the Angel's. But even this purest and most unselfish spiritual radiance wins no frank response. All have their selfish ends in love; if we cannot satisfy these, our unselfish offering is rejected.

I feard the roughness [later “fury”] of my wind
 Would blight all blossoms fair & true
 And my sun it shind & shind
 [But] And my wind it never blew

But a blossom fair or true
 Was not found on any tree
 For all blossoms grew & grew
 Fruitless false tho fair to see



XII. Everywhere he goes in his native city he sees beauty of feature and conventional gravity of demeanour—and perhaps one should add invitations to parties but not patronage for his print-shop. With such intractable material, with so conventionalised and tradition-bound a people, how can he ever radiate the light that is in him? And then there enters for the first time the political theme. What is London—what is England, to him? The open West, the free plains of America are his spiritual home. The poem is the seed of the “America,” the “Europe,” and the great Song of Experience, “London.”

Why should I care for the men of thames
Or the cheating waves of chartered streams
Or shrink at the little blasts of fear
That the hireling blows into my ear

Tho born on the cheating banks of Thames
Tho his waters bathed my infant limbs
I spurn'd his waters away from me
I was born a slave but I long to be free
[*Later* The Ohio shall wash his stains from me
I was born a slave but I go to be free]

XIII. But, after all, the cries of love, and fear, in London streets speak a deeper bondage of man than the charters that regulate marriage and money. Bondage is something inherent in life itself. And so Blake turns back fiercely to his fairest theme of Innocence, to show that Life germinated in Joy is born and developed merely in Sorrow.

My mother groand my father wept
Into the dangerous world I leapt
Helpless naked piping loud
Like a fiend hid in a cloud

Struggling in my fathers hands
 Striving against my swaddling bands
 Bound & weary I thought best
 To sulk upon my mothers breast

After this sulking acceptance of earth, the child (like the poison apple and the "fruitless" blossoms) "grew day after day." Blake then changed the word "grew" to "smild" (still reminiscent of the poison apple watered by smiles), but the smile was too sunny and the word "soothd," as being more covert and politic, was substituted. We need all three words to get at what Blake was thinking. The Babe now crawls about and becomes at home on the earth, but always covering its secret egoism (born of limitations) with disarming smiles. Then we return to the images at the top of the page and to the thistles and wastes of the previous page; there is nothing sweet and beautiful found in this hard world to restore the soul's divine nature. So the verses now runs on:

And I grew [*later* "smild" and *then* "soothd"] day after day
 Till upon the ground I stray
 And I grew [*later* "smild"] night after night
 Seeking only for delight

But upon the nettly ground
 No delight was to be found

But these last two lines take Blake off his theme and he deletes them to go on with a description of the errant temptations symbolised by fruits and blossoms awaiting the growing child:

And I saw before me shine
 Clusters of the wandering vine
 And beyond a mirtle tree
 Stretchd its blossoms out to me

Blake has now come to the foot of the page, but instead of beginning again at the top he begins a parallel column level with the first verse and goes on:

But a Priest with holy look
In his hand a holy book
Pronounced curses on his head
Who the fruit or blossoms shed

The last lines mean that the priest pronounces curses on the head of the man who picks the fruits or blossoms. Both are symbolical of sensual pleasures, especially sexual favours or enjoyments, and the child perceives that those who condemn the pleasures of sex and appetite as base, indulge in them secretly, and (for example, as respectable fathers of families) openly enjoy their results.

I beheld the Priest by night
He embracd my mirtle [*later* the blossom] bright
I beheld the Priest by day
Where beneath my [*later* "Underneath the"] vine[s] he lay

The "mirtle," with its profusion of falling flowers, Blake uses as the symbol of marriage or sanctioned sex. But he wishes to differentiate between the priest's attitude to this and the pleasures of the "wandering vine"—so he makes the verses before the entrance of the Priest refer only to the wandering temptation, reserving the mirtle for the next verse. For his first reference he now substitutes:

And many a lovely flower & tree
Stretchd their blossoms out to me

and, transferring the "mirtle," makes the last two lines of the "Priest" verse run:

Pronounced curses on my head
And bound me in a mirtle shade

The next verse he deletes altogether and substitutes one which probably means the same as "I saw a Chapel all of gold," where the serpent pollutes the holy place; that is to say, the priest takes sexual pleasure under his guardianship and sanctions it, part in secret and part openly:

Like a serpent [*later* to serpents] in the night
 He [They] embracd my mirtle [blossoms] bright
 Like a serpent [to serpents] in the [holy man by] day
 Underneath my [the] vines he [they] lay

The next verse, which concludes the poem in its first form, haunted Blake for many a day, and after abandoning the poem (except for the first two verses) he keeps introducing the lines elsewhere to try to make use of them.

So I smote him¹ & his [their] gore
 Staind the roots my mirtle bore
 But the time of youth is fled
 And grey hairs are on my head

What this means is that the child, now advanced in years violently throws over the priests of convention and their system, but that the effort leaves a stain upon the natural roots of sexual love. He has murdered the law, but, even so, the murdered law pollutes the source of joy; and moreover it is too late. The philosophy to see through these conventions comes only to maturity, long after the moment when the natural innocent appetites awake: "Where the holy light / Had just removd the curtains of the night," as he was to sing a little later.

After all this, Blake tries again, going back to the second verse and writing a third at the foot of the second column. He continues, after the wonderful line:

By adding a "t" and a loop to the "i" he subsequently turns "him" into them.

To sulk upon my mother's breast

with:

When I saw that rage was vain
And to sulk [sooth] would nothing gain
[I began to so] Seeking many an artful wile
[*Finally* Turning many a trick & wile]
I began to soothe & smile

He crosses out the rest of this column and, instead of introducing the somewhat irrelevant priest, makes the father (in whose hands he had just been "struggling") take the part, adding the emendation, at the head of the second column, above the horizontal line already separating the poem from the space above:

My father then with holy look
In his hands a holy book
Pronounced curses on my head
And bound me in a mirtle shade

At one time he changed the Priest to Priests, and even after introducing the father the consequent corrections of "him" and "his" to "them" and "theirs" are allowed to stand; showing, I think, that the poem was abandoned as it stood, and that probably the title crowded in above the first verse was added last of all, and after he had decided to use only the first two verses.

Mr Plowman makes the very interesting suggestion that the poem on the next page, "In a mirtle shade," is really part of this one, and that these words are no title but a tag to show where the verses join in.

Mr Keynes adopted this suggestion in the earlier impressions of his complete single volume "Nonesuch," Blake (1927), but for various reasons I cannot accept it. The change of tense alone would make one hesitate. All through the present poem the form is narrative and

in the historic tense, but the poem over the page is present and the "mirtle" is addressed in the second person. There are other reasons connected with the placing of the MS. that we shall deal with in their place, but which to my mind almost settle the question.

Two poems remain on this page written above the second column of "Infant Sorrow."

XIV. The first is a night-poem and perfectly expresses a persistent thought of Blake's. Beautiful as might be this communion of body and spirit with his wife at end of day, it still fell short of the full and open love that might be. It is all plain enough except the expression "possessed of Day." The "thousand spirits" are poetic thoughts, moods, what you will (for they are not to be "caged" in definitions) which, wanting the light of day, are only half themselves, but "possessed" of it, reveal the presence of countless and sweet joys. How can we expect perfect happiness and understanding when our love-joys are cloked in pretences, and their frank and honest beauty has to abandon its frankness, as though it were a thing of shame? "Betray" merely means 'make evident.'

Silent Silent Night
Quench the holy light
Of thy torches bright

For possesd of Day
Thousand spirits stray
That sweet joys betray

Why should joys be sweet
Used with deceit
Nor with sorrows meet

But an honest joy
Does itself destroy
For a harlot coy

XV. As so often happens with Blake, some word used in a poem suggests a thought for the next. The word "harlot" takes his mind back to the "heath and the waste"—to the deserts outside marriage. But the word "lapwing" needs a little interpretation. Birds, as we have frequently seen, symbolise love-thoughts. The lapwing is the broken-flighted, unsatisfied love-thought (or love-thinker; it is all the same to Blake), haunting the outcasts of society without realising the bondage they threaten. Blake gives the cynical advice to such wandering spirits to direct their flight to places where sex has been legitimised to ensure its fruitfulness. If this interpretation is correct—as I cannot but think—it is the only time when Blake recommends an attack on marriage from without. Elsewhere his plea is always to the married themselves to break the bond. It is, of course, possible, even probable, that the advice is purely "angelic" (as in No. VIII. above); the poet's love flights will be happier among the happy.

O lapwing thou fliest around the heath
Nor seest the net that is spread beneath
Why dost thou not fly among the corn fields
They cannot spread nets where a harvest yields

The magnificent sketch of Satan triumphant on the facing page seems connected with both these poems, representing either Night and Deceit protecting sex-love in marriage, and perhaps thereby opening opportunity to the lapwing, or it is a very grand and unexpected vision of the lapwing itself. It was possibly also associated in Blake's mind with the Devil cursing over the heath and the furze.

XVI. Turning over the page, Blake continues his latest theme. The libertine or lapwing gives place to the poet or free-spirit, who gives his reasons for rejecting the proposal to attack the conventionally virtuous and protected. The proposal itself is also

somewhat different. It is now the broad general suggestion that no man with the potency of virility in him need be an outcast. Notwithstanding its "chartered streams," "this is a fine country," and to complain that in a land of "vines and blossoms" any man need be forlorn, is as though a farmer with his lap full of seed refused to sow and reap the harvest.

Thou hast a lap full of seed
And this is a fine country
Why dost thou not cast thy seed
And live in it merrily

The answer is very bitter. It is only among the outcasts a poet can be free from those vile ideas which religion has imparted into sex, substituting for its sweet flowers stinking weeds.

Oft I've cast it on the sand
And turned it into fruitful land
But on no other ground [can]
Can I sow my seed
Without pulling [*then* tearing] up
Some stinking weed

He then makes the verse into a question:

Shall I cast it on the sand
And turn it into fruitful land
For on no other ground *etc.*

This change appears to me to be a very significant one for the close student of Blake's mind. I feel sure it is due to the fact that he cannot bring himself to say that he ever *has* played the libertine. The query, 'why shouldn't I?' is everywhere—the statement 'thus did I'—nowhere, to be found.

And ~~then~~ cast it on the sand
And ~~turned~~ ^{turn} it into fruitful land
But on no other ground ~~can~~
Cultivate I sow my seed
We hunt ^{tearing} ~~pulling~~ up
Some stinking weed

Earth raised up her head
From the darkness dread & drear
Her eyes ^{open} ~~for~~ ^{to} the dead by her feet
None dead;
And her looks, clouded with grey despair.

Weeping over
The father of the ancient men

The company of Youth Longman

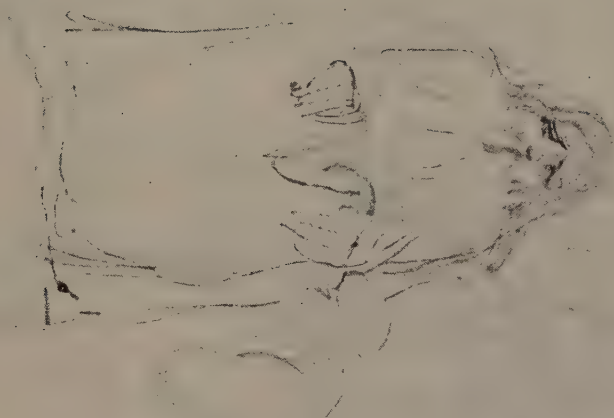
Not less my love with bridges bound

~~How soft & weary~~ 98
How soft & weary
Lies my heart
Like to sleep upon the ground
And dream my marble bound

Does your babe its delight
 When hands & lips are gone
 Does he ever see
 Love ~~the~~ ^{his} hand by night
 Or the glances in darkening place

in a little shade

- 1 Why should I be bound to thee
 O my lovely marble tree
 age for purchased be bound
 to any tree that grows on ground
- 3 As my wealth yields me vain
 to behold my heavy chain
 off my father, say
 that I might be whole as I
 but caught at our simplicity
 so I muste him & his goe
 Heir'd the roots my wealth - bone
 But the tree for me



The unity of the design on the two preceding pages is only faintly discernible in the reproduction. The tortured figure of Earth on the first page is involved in lines which should flow down continuously from the clouds around the throne of the "Father."

From the point of view of interpretation an even more serious loss is in the face of the Christ, whose beard has failed to print.

XVII. The sower has given *his* answer, but Blake now takes a bold flight of imagination and conceives the very Earth as answering. Why cannot she bring forth unlimited harvests to the sowers of seed?¹

For the first time he starts with his title: "The Earths Answer," and a poem of such tremendous power follows that in the end he abandoned the little verse it originally answered, and wrote a new poem ('The Bard') in the same metre (with an illustration of Earth raising her head), thus giving Earth something adequate to "answer." Then the two were used for an Introduction to the "Songs of Experience," corresponding to the Introduction ('The Piper') to the "Songs of Innocence." At the same time he gave a deeper significance to the word "Earth" by striking out the article "The."

Again I cannot resist a speculation which the critical reader may prefer to dismiss. Blake was temperamentally incapable of a voyage of departure from the conventions he scorned, unless he could carry his Catherine with him. And "Earth's Answer" seems to me almost too much like an invading blast from another mind stubbornly breaking in upon Blake's dreams, and hindering his course, to be conceived of as a mere turn of his own thought.

If we think of "Earth" as a term for Woman, and in a sense for Catherine herself, I think the poem gains a new meaning, that helps to explain its close connection with the verses at the foot of the page.

[The] Earths Answer

Earth raisd up her head
From the darkness dread & drear
Her eyes [*then* orbs *del.*] fled [*then* dead and finally Her light fled]
Stony dread
And her locks coverd with grey despair

¹ We must always remember that parallel with Blake's plea for the liberty of the body (and even, I am sure, superseding it at times) is a plea for the liberty of mind. The lap full of seed is not only bodily seed, but the seed of poetry.

Prisond on watry shore
 Stony [*then* Starry] jealousy does keep my den
 Cold & hoar
 Weeping oer
 I hear the [father of the] ancient men

(at one time Blake changed this to "I hear the ancient father of men," a very significant expression).

Catherine cannot free herself (as Blake can) from the thought of a God of the stony law; she is still prisoned in "watry" materialism, and yet she feels the cruelty of the chains, not that *she* is inflicting on her husband, but that this God seems to command.

Cruel father of men
 Cruel jealous weeping fear
 Can delight
 Closd in night
 The virgins of youth & morning bear
 [*later* "cruel" in the first line and "weeping" in the second are both changed to "selfish," and "closd" to "chaind"]

Her mind goes back to the days of early marriage, and in a cry of pain she calls out:

Break this heavy chain
 That does close [*then* freeze] my bones around
 Selfish vain
 Thou my bane [*then* Eternal bane]
 Hast my love with bondage bound
 [*Then* That free love with bondage bound]¹

¹ Although I think Blake may have conceived these sentiments as being those of his partner, I imagine the real sentiments of Catherine were quite different (*v. supra*, p. 215). The ideas are surely rather those of the free-spirits he was among than of his simple-minded spouse.

XVIII. Then follows Blake's own cry in the same vein, and he begins a new poem immediately below, as I conceive (possibly it is only a new verse), using the "mirtle" tree metaphor:

- | | | |
|----|------------------------------|---------------|
| | To a lovely mirtle bound | } <i>del.</i> |
| | Blossoms showing all around | |
| 2. | O How sick & weary I | |
| | Underneath my mirtle lie | |
| | Like to dung upon the ground | |
| | Underneath my mirtle bound | |

And then (as always) continuing the poem in the next column the same distance up the page as the beginning, he goes on to take up his wife's cry of sympathy, and introduces the cynical priest of convention:

3. Oft my mirtle sighd in vain
 To behold my heavy chain
 Oft the priest beheld [*then* my father saw] us sigh
 And laughd at our simplicity

Blake then introduces the last verse of the abandoned "Infant Sorrow" with the meaning explained above:

So I smote him & his gore
 Staind the roots my mirtle bore
 But the time of youth is fled
 And grey hairs are on my head

He then (trespassing on the sketch) writes a new introductory verse above, and numbers the other stanzas and finally adds a title. This title appears to begin with a small letter "in a mirtle shade," which confirmed Mr Plowman in regarding it as a tag. But careful examination shows a faint capital before the "n" (which is faintly visible in the accompanying facsimile):

In a mirtle shade
 1. Why should I be bound to thee
 O my lovely mirtle tree
 Love free love cannot be bound
 To any tree that grows on ground

It is of course possible that Blake began this as a separate poem, but that when he added this verse he meant to make it an addition to the earlier poem and headed it with a tag to show where it was to come. But in that case he ought not strictly speaking to have numbered the verses 1, 2, 3, as we now find them.

There is a wonderful illustration begun on the opposite page, but invading the present one, representing the stony father of the ancient men, and Earth in the form of a woman raising up her head in hopeless challenge. But there is another figure that does not come into the poem—and I doubt whether Blake himself could have told you how or whence it appeared. The beautiful slender figure of Christ stands like a wraith on the left hand of the Father, interceding. The Drama does not end with the stony law of jealousy and “the lapséd Soul.” There is a Saviour to come—poetry and forgiveness and Humanity. It is the presage of Blake’s return to Christianity after the bitterness of Experience—as yet perhaps hardly realised by himself, but there, silent and inevitable, in his deep mind. But what a different Christianity from that of Innocence, or, indeed, of most Christians. Blake’s Christ is the inside truth as opposed to the outside.

XVII. (Addition). Finally, Blake adds a thought to his “Earth’s Answer,” so precious that he writes it all across the limbs of his beautiful figure of Earth:

Does spring hide its delight
 When buds & blossoms grow
 Does the sower sow
 His seed by night

which becomes finally:

Does spring hide its joy
When buds & blossoms grow
Does the sower
Sow by night
Or the plowman in darkness plow

which he indicates as the third verse of "Earth's Answer," deleting the one he had written. In "Experience" he uses both.

Blake has now got through the worst. He has realised that the tortures he and his wife had been inflicting upon one another are due to something of which she and he are alike victims. As we turn to the next page, which is one of the most wonderful of all the wonders Blake has left us, we leave behind the darkest passages of his personal grief and storm. Gleams and flashes of light break through the sullen and angry clouds to end in the most terrific and triumphant of his lyrical inventions, "The Tyger."

XIX. The first poem on the next page is still personal in form. It is a version of the verses on the Thames and Ohio, but notwithstanding the "I" with which it opens, the complaint is less personal and a growing note of pity is discernible. The title "London" is rather crowded in and was probably added. The verses ran :

I wander thro each dirty street
Near where the dirty Thames does flow
And see [mark] in every face I meet
Marks of weakness marks of woe

In every cry of every man
In every voice of every child
In every voice in every ban
The german forged links I hear

England had been in alliance with Prussia in Blake's infancy during the Seven Years War, and had more recently employed German troops in the American War of Independence—so that when in 1792 Prussia declared war on the French Revolution, Blake no doubt considered that London was in some sense involved in a crime of militarism against liberty. But after he had altered the second line of the verse to rhyme with the last (making it, "In every infants cry of fear"), he changed "german forged" to "mind forgd" and "links" to "manacles," making it a far greater line. This may have been done at a later date, as there is no indication of its being one of the alterations made during the original act of composition.

The next verse follows:

But most the chimney sweepers cry
 Blackens oer the churches walls
 [*Later*, Every blackning church appalls]
 And the hapless soldiers sigh
 Runs in blood down palace walls

And here, I think, he left for the time a poem already the greatest he had written, and perhaps laid down his pen for the night, for the next poem is one of his periodic songs of sleep and waking.

XX. This is a very simple little song, to which he afterwards added an introductory verse. It begins in the first person, but that is merely a figure. It may have been suggested by the thought of the chimney sweeper he had just referred to, and who in the "Songs of Innocence" "rose in the dark" full of cheer. On the other hand, it is just possible that like other sleep and waking songs it refers to his wife, and describes her recent unhappy awakening from innocence.

The meaning is then very simple. She was discovered by him in

the darkness of complete innocence, feeling only such dim fears and joys as we murmur in our slumbers. But in the tremendous experiences of Love's morning, her awakened passions sought higher joys only to meet with scorn (her blossoms were "mirtle blossoms"—"O" how it hurt):

I was found [*then* slept] in the dark
In the silent night
I murmured my fears
And I felt delight

In the morning I went
As rosy as morn
To seek for new Joy
But O met with scorn

XXI. The next poem still broods over the theme of darkness and obscurity. Who or what is responsible for the chains of Earth that lead the tender spirit into bondage and suffering? What god or man begot this blight of jealousy?

Why art thou silent & invisible
Man of Jealousy
Why dost thou hide thyself in clouds
From every searching Eye

Why darkness & obscurity
In all thy words & laws
That none dare eat the fruit but from
The wily serpents jaws

He changes "Man" into "Father" and then in a sudden vein of lightness, reminiscent of the "Island in the Moon," he answers his poem by adding a whimsical title. The reason for the Father's invis-

bility is that he does not exist. He is Nobody. So Blake dedicates his poem "To Nobodaddy"—Daddy no-one. This, of course, is no solution of the problem of ultimate responsibility. At best it means that since no supernatural power sanctions "the law" we need no longer observe a command that puts "love" (the fruit) into the power of the priest (the serpent). But though it is little more than a frolic, it eased Blake's mind—with great consequences. An alteration to the final line is in a thoroughly relaxed mood, and is no more than a gibe at his wife's (or other women's) scruples.

In any case, he suggests that if there is no God, it is just woman herself that brings about all the secrecy. And he changes the last line to:

Or is it because Secrecy gains feminine [females loud] applause

XXII. But there follows a very strange thing. The reference to the serpent, and the fruit, suggests a lurid contrast, and harking back to his first poem on the rose-tree and her thorns, he sets out to make a set of contrasts. The rose has an envious thorn; the sheep, timid as it is, has a horn; the lily that looks so white and chaste is a symbol of love; "the lion" (possibly the British lion,¹ as this page is political amongst other things) in his might "secures freedom & peace."

"The rose puts envious," he begins. Then:

The lustful rose puts forth a thorn
The coward sleep a threatening horn
While the lilly white shall in love delight
And the lion increase freedom & peace

Then he drew a line and, for the time, that was the end of it. He left room for another verse and began the second column of the page.

¹ It is to be remembered that the "British lion" figured in the fighting (at all events in the propaganda) of the later eighteenth-century wars.

Under this earth dark street
From where the dusky Thames does flow
And in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe

In every cry of every pain
In every Infants cry of fear
In every Infants cry of pain
In every Infants cry of pain
In every Infants cry of pain

Flows the burning sun
Blackness, as the darkness of the night
And the hapless soldiers sigh
Runs in blood down palace walls

I sleep in the dark
In the silent night
I am moved by fear
And I feel despair
In the morning I arise
To work in morning
To seek for new joy
But I meet with scorn
But I meet with scorn
But I meet with scorn
But I meet with scorn

Why dost thou hide thyself in clouds
From every searching eye
Why dost thou hide thyself in clouds
From every searching eye
Why dost thou hide thyself in clouds
From every searching eye
Why dost thou hide thyself in clouds
From every searching eye

Why dost thou hide thyself in clouds
From every searching eye
Why dost thou hide thyself in clouds
From every searching eye
Why dost thou hide thyself in clouds
From every searching eye
Why dost thou hide thyself in clouds
From every searching eye

The purple stain of blood
A stain of blood
A stain of blood
A stain of blood

When the young of children are laid on the grave
And the young of children are laid on the grave
And the young of children are laid on the grave
And the young of children are laid on the grave

Then come home my children
And the doors of night are
Your young day are
And your wonder of night in day

Are not the joys of morning
Than the joys of night
And are the joys of youth
Ashamed of the light

Let age & sickness of old age
The vineyard in the night
But there who burn with
Pluck fruit before the light

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~~Burnt in deep of deep, or shield
The cruel eye of them one
Could hear of sword or drums or spear
What the hand dare edge the spear~~

~~And did he laugh his work to see
Heard the ^{galleys} ~~thunder~~ of the sea
And he who made the land make thee
When the stars threw down their spears
And waters heaven with their tears~~

~~Tiger Tiger burning bright
In the forests of the night
What immortal hand or eye
That framed thy fearful symmetry~~

~~And what shoulder and what art
Could swing the hammer of thy heart
And when thy heart began to beat
What dread hand and what dread feet~~

~~When the stars threw down their spears
And waters heaven with their tears
Did he smile his work to thee
Did he who made the land make thee~~

~~Tiger Tiger burning bright
In the forests of the night
That immortal hand or eye
That framed thy fearful symmetry~~

XXIII. It will be remembered that in the mood of relaxation which produced "An Island in the Moon," Blake found his true muse, and wrote the first "Holy Thursday," a song of London, and then the "Nurse's Song," a song of the country. Now he writes by the side of his great poem of disillusion, "London," a bitter version of the "Nurse's Song," which I think first went as follows:

When the voices of children are heard on the green
And whispings are in the dale
The desires [*then* days] of youth rise fresh¹ in my mien
My face turns green & pale

He concludes:

Then come home my children the sun is gone down
And the dews of night arise
Your spring & your day are wasted in play
And your winter & night in disguise

The poem is nearly the same as he engraved in "Experience," where it has already been explained. But its interest here is that it is a kind of answer to "Nobodaddy."

The responsibility is not with any god at all. It is this grown-up jealousy of Innocence in its awaking to adolescence, that hurries love into secrecy and, by thwarting the play of Innocence, begets the disguises of maturity.

XXIV. That is a night song and the next is a morning song; the most momentous morning perhaps in Blake's life, for the day was to colour all the rest.

¹ This word might be "high"—the tail of the "f," if it is "fresh," is very faint. Keynes reads the second word of the line "heart" and the last "mind." I am not quite certain that my reading "desires" is right, but I feel sure "heart" is wrong, and I am nearly certain "mien" is the right reading.

The word "desires" in the last poem; the thought of the lion in the last but one; the joyous morning; and the thought of youth, combine to produce a new mood, and Blake breaks out into a note of clear, if still defiant, triumph in :

Are not the joys of morning sweeter
Than the joys of night
And are the vigorous joys of youth
Ashamed of the light

Let age & sickness silent rob
The vineyards in the night
But those who burn with vigorous youth
Pluck fruits before the light

The word 'before' means in the presence of; love rites should not belong to night and darkness but to the light of day. At last a light has been kindled which the night cannot quench, and that evening Blake wrote a sequel to "The Lamb," which has immortalised him as a poet not less surely than "The Sons of God shouting for Joy" has immortalised him as an artist.

XXV. This is a night poem and the real answer to "Nobodaddy." That was the God that none can see, because he is not there. This is the Being visible in everything that "Acts & Is." The title was added later. He begins with the thought of light breaking through darkness, the conquering lion still perhaps in mind, and the question as to the ultimate responsibility for creation.

Tyger Tyger burning bright
In the forests of the night
What immortal hand or [*probably & at first*] eye
Could [*then dare del.*] frame thy fearful symmetry

In what [*then* Burnt in, *del.*] distant deeps or skies
Burnt the [*then* The cruel, *del.*] fire of thine eyes
On what wings dare he aspire
What the hand dare sieze the fire

And what shoulder & what art
Could twist the sinews of thy heart
And when thy heart began to beat
What dread hand & what dread feet

Could fetch it from the furnace deep
And in thy horrid ribs dare steep
In the well of sanguine woe

But the verse does not immediately come, so he begins again:

In what clay & in what mould
Were thine eyes of fury rolld

Then, impatient to arrive while the blast of inspiration still burns hot, he deletes the above five lines and writes with redoubled fury:

What [where] the hammer what [where] the chain
In what furnace was thy brain
What the anvil what the arm
Could its deadly terrors charm (?)

The last word was soon altered to "clasp," then deleted in favour of "grasp." He tries "arm," "grasp," and "clasp" in the previous line, and finally "dread grasp,"

Dare its deadly terrors clasp

Then in triumph he repeats the first verse, substituting & for "or" and "form" for "frame," but finally retaining "frame." With this return to the opening theme Blake had completed the greatest thing

he had done either in design or verse. But he could not let it alone, and it was to become greater yet in his hands. He wanted to introduce the Incarnation, and on the opposite page, already used for a sketch, he began a new version of verse three, starting, characteristically exactly opposite the original verse 3, with this line:

What the shoulder [*then* ankle] what the knee
to rhyme with the wonderful line he had conceived:

Did he who made the lamb make thee

But the poem is not yet explicit enough to stand so abrupt and disconnected a couplet, and departing entirely from verse 3 he reverts to a theme suggested by the "Piper." There, the Child (the inspiring Spirit) laughed as it invoked the poet's "song about a Lamb," and now Blake conceives the protean image of the Almighty craftsman shaking the heavens with joyous laughter at the wild dissonance he has brought forth, albeit for the expansion of his final harmony. The laughter again (as in the "Piper") suggests tears. It may be that as he sat on into the night there came upon him from the starlit skies his wonderful image of the steely heavens weeping into watery dawn. But for Blake all nature was something more than nature, and became an emblem of deeper things in man, and the drama of his salvation. And as the dawn is something more than the rising of the material sun, the stars are something more than the fires of a boundless sea of vacant space. At this period Night symbolised for Blake a prison into which the mighty powers of convention banished the full daylight joys of life. It is probably not too much to describe the stars as the seeds of Man with which the womb of night is sown, and whose harvest is the Dawn.¹ For the benighted soul

¹ There is a strange design in "Jerusalem" (p. 21) of a man flagellating some women with many-tongued whips, each thong ending in a star; and in the MS. book is the strange expression, a "Starry" (deleted) and then a "phallic" whip.

these sexual atoms are all that is left of Day, and all that the darkness of a priestly rationalism itself cannot obliterate. They are the symbol at once of man's slavery and his unconquerable soul. And so it is their thrust of light into the great womb of Nature that dissolves the night into tender Pity and fertility, and brings forth the Sun, even as Nature first became the receptacle of, and then gave birth to, Christ.

But it is not only the inner meaning of these lines that has changed this poem; the outward image is too strong to serve in the position originally intended. He had set out to say, 'Did the creative Spirit labouring through the wilderness of night laugh to see what he had done, when day returned?' Now the return of day has been expressed in so splendid an image that it must have come first, even had it not represented a cosmic event in the divine drama of man's redemption. So Blake renumbered the lines, and realising that the laugh could not come after the tears, whether or not it could stand before, he wrote the verse thus:

When the stars threw down their spears
 And waterd heaven with their tears
 And [*word illegible, perhaps could, then dare*] he smile his work to see
 Did [*then Dare*] he who made the lamb make thee

Even so he did not surrender the laugh without an effort. He had tried twice to introduce the word "Dare" into this verse:

Dare he who made the lamb make thee

and

dare he smile

It was this last change that made him try once more with:

dare he laugh

But the stars prevailed again, not by their weapons but by their compassion, and again restored the verse to the calm sublimity it had already once reached. Even "Dare," with its suggestion of moral effort and hazard, was withdrawn that it might return into the poem with the more tremendous effect in the last line.

It was perhaps this idea that led Blake next to conceive a version in which the word "dare" came only into the one line. In any case he now writes out, in a new place, a four-versed version in which both the second and the fourth verses are omitted, and the word "Dare" occurs only in the last line of the first and final verses:

Tyger Tyger burning bright
In the forests of the night
What Immortal hand & eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry

And what shoulder & what art
Could twist the sinews of thy heart
And when thy heart began to beat
What dread hand & what dread feet

When the stars threw down their spears
And waterd heaven with thir tears
Did he smile his work to see
Did he who made the lamb make thee

Tyger Tyger burning bright
In the forests of the night
What immortal hand & eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry

This whole poem is in a milder vein. But it was now perhaps that he tried in another place a new form in which to re-introduce the second verse, containing the word "Dare" only once instead of twice.

He also attempts to bring in again a suggestion of the "cruelty" that he had abandoned in its grosser form in the lines rejected for the imagery of the smithy:

Burnt in distant deeps or skies
The cruel fire of thine eye
Could heart descend or wings aspire
What the hand dare sieze the fire

But the new verse is rejected, and finally he secured his effect of emphasising the word "Dare" in the final line, without sacrificing it either in verse 2, or verse 4, by returning to the original form of the line in verse 1, so that:

Dare frame thy fearful symmetry

in the last verse was contrasted with:

Could frame thy fearful symmetry

in the first. The physical mystery of creation is thus made to act as a mighty background for its still more dread moral mystery.

We see that at one time Blake had toned down the whole poem to make it conform to the solemn and sublime mood of the stars; and his greatness as a craftsman is nowhere more greatly shown than the judgment with which he 'restored and rejected' from his many conceptions of the poem, when he finally came to engrave it.

After the experience of this encounter with the gods, Blake is a different man, and though I think he left the page now (except for two slight alterations) until he came to select the poems for engraving, when he did return it was to make some striking changes.

(XX.) The first is the great and terrible verse he adds to the

"London," crowding it in by the side of the little poem, "I was found in the dark," now changed to:

I slept in the dark

(XIX.) The important thing about this change in the "London" is that he has come to conceive that the desecration of womanhood is something more infamous, or at all events more blasphemous, even than the cruelty to children. He alters "But most the chimney sweepers cry" to "How the chimney sweepers cry," and begins the new verse—"But most the midnight harlots curse."

He moves surely towards the completion of one of his greatest verses, and one of his greatest poems, through many trials and rejections, as in "The Tyger." First he wrote:

But most the midnight harlots curse
From every dismal street I hear
Weaves around the marriage hearse
And blasts the new born infants tear

He deletes this and begins again:

But most from every street [*then thro'* wintry streets] I hear
How the midnight harlots curse
Blasts the new born infants tear
And hangs [*smites*] with plagues the marriage hearse

Then he tries new forms of the first line:

But most the shrieks of youth I hear

and later he gets it right making a note thus:

But most through midnight, etc.
How the youthful——

He did not complete the lines, as he had now little room, and was probably proceeding at once to engrave them.

(XXIII.) The alterations to the "Lilly" below are scarcely less significant. At some time he substituted for the line about the lion, a line suggested by the words about the priest and the soldier, that occur at the end of the poem on the next page. The meaning of these is that the society produced by the deceits of the priest is radically unstable and results in tumult and war which the soldier has to quell. "And the lion secures freedom & peace" became:

The priest loves war & the soldier peace

It was perhaps when Blake conceived the 'trilogy' for engraving in "Experience" that he converted this little poem of contrasts to a song of "The Lilly," the contrasts now being used entirely to emphasise the beauty of a white and golden purity in love. The rose at first is "lustful" in contrast, but the radiance of the poem converts the rose to "modest," while the "coward" sheep becomes "humble":

The modest rose puts forth a thorn
The humble sheep a threatening horn
While the lilly white shall in love delight
Nor a thorn nor a threat stain her beauty bright

This last line was evidently written in the MS. after "The Tyger." Ever after Blake associates Roses and Lilies as the symbols of bodily and spiritual love and beauty respectively.

XXVI. After writing the "London," "To Nobodaddy," "The Lilly," and "The Tyger," Blake's mind is turned to the contrast between the sweet and noble natural world as the manifestation of Deity, and the world as made by man and his man-made God.

We are in a new phase of the MS., and he has probably conceived the idea of building his verse into some sort of a book. Though the personal and biographical note breaks through, there is never again quite so much heat and pain. Having relieved his spirit of its own intolerable burden, he becomes concerned to apply the contrast he has realised, between the world man has made for himself, and the world which the Holy Spirit fashions from within.

He begins the next page (the most difficult and interesting for exegesis) with an attempt to describe the World of Man:

How vain (?) a judge is Man
From nothing who began
How Contempt & Scorn

Then he deletes and tries again:

What a world is Man
His Earth . . .

Again he deletes and then takes up the theme of: "I heard an Angel singing," developing its thesis of the derived character of Mercy, Pity, Peace. He decides to call it "The human Image" in contradistinction to "The Divine Image," making it definitely a contrast Song:

The human Image

Pity could be no more
If there was nobody poor
[*then* If we did not make somebody poor]
And Mercy no more could be
If all were as happy as we

And mutual fear brings Peace
Till the selfish Loves increase
Then Cruelty knits a snare
And spreads his seeds [*then* baits] with care

He sits down with holy fears
 And waters the ground with tears
 Then humility takes its root
 Underneath his foot

Soon spreads the dismal shade
 Of Mystery over his head
 And the caterpillar & fly
 Feed on the Mystery

And it bears the fruit of deceit
 Ruddy & sweet to eat
 And the raven his nest has made
 In its thickest shade

The Gods of the Earth & Sea
 Sought thro nature to find this tree
 But their search was all in vain
 Till they sought in the human brain¹

When they did so (the next verse continues):

They said this mystery never shall cease
 The priest loves [promotes] war & the soldier peace

He leaves room to complete the verse at the foot of the column, and then begins an eighth verse alongside the first; further describing what the gods of earth and sea discover in the human brain:

XXVII. There souls of men are bought & sold
 And cradled infancy is sold
 And youth to slaughter houses led
 And maidens for a bit of bread

¹ He finally altered this line in pencil to:

“ There grows one in the human brain ”

This he revised to:

There souls of men are bought & sold
 And milkfed infancy for gold
 And youth to slaughter houses led
 And beauty for a bit of bread

It is one of Blake's sternest verses, and though perhaps he intended to write more he now seeks release from the whole dark and depressing theme. The difference in the metre of these last additions (*XXVI.* and *XXVII.*) has led most editors to regard them as independent fragments. But the meaning is so clearly continuous that they were almost certainly connected in Blake's mind, even if they were not intended as part of the same poem.¹

XXVIII. (XX.). He draws a horizontal line, and for relief turns, as he so often turns, to a rural image; one he has already put into verse. The image is of the flower that slept in the dark, the life of instinct half awake to fear and joy, till it wakes at the morning call of love, only to be rebuffed.

But Blake has been "in the forest of the night" since he wrote those lines, and his mind is full of pain, so he begins:

As I wanderd the forest
 The green leaves among
 I heard a wild thistle
 Singing a Song

I slept in the dark &c

Then he turns back to the poem thus introduced, to find it not the song of a thistle that hurts, but of a tender flower that is hurt.

¹ Mr Plowman regards *XXVII.* as an addition to the poem on the opposite page, being in the same metre. It would then follow the line "Are Such things done on Albions shore?"

~~1845~~

How to change it

Lewitz

~~W. B. C. in the~~

The Roman Image

Pity counts for no more
If we do not make somebody poor
If we do not make anybody poor

And Mercy no more could be
If all were as happy as we.

And mutual love brings Peace
Till the selfish loves increase
Then Cruelty knits a snare
And spreads his ~~own~~ baits with care

He sits down with holy fears
And waters the ground with tears,
Then humbly takes its root
Underneath his foot.

Tom spread the dismal shade
 Of mystery over his head
 And the caterpillar & fly
 Fed on the mystery

And it from the fuel of dearest
Ruddy or sweet to eat
And the room his nest has made
In its thickest shade

The God of the Earth & Sea
Taught thee nothing to find this tree
But thine search was all in vain

Tell they sought it in the larger brain
There grows one in the memory brain
They said the memory never shall cease
The great ^{power} ~~power~~ of the soldier power
^{promises}

Love is, only & always bread
Always to joy inclined
Always warm & unconfin'd
And breaks all chains from every mind

Their sons & daughters brought up
 were ^{mostly} in infancy ~~and~~ for sale
 and given to slaughter houses to
 be ^{brutally} ~~manacled~~ for a lot of bread

The into flowering song
 As I onward can follow
 The green leaves among
 Heard a note the flower
 Singing a song
 I kept in the ^{Parth} ~~dark~~

Th. such 2011

Prove thou art sick
The reasonable worm
That flies in the night
In the howling storm

Both found out they had

Dark sweet love And her dark secret love
Both life destroy Does thy life destroy

I walked ^{to the pond} abroad in a snowy day
 I kept the soft snow with me to play

She played the mother in all her prime
 At that sweet hour 'twixt be thought a crime
 And the woe of a mother of a ^{dead} ^{crime} ^{crime}

Remove away that bloody church
Remove away that marriage hearse
Remove away that ^{negro} poison of blood
You'll quite remove the ancient curse
You'll

To my Mother
O my Mother I be bound to thee
O my Mother I be bound to thee
O my Mother I be bound to thee
O my Mother I be bound to thee
O my Mother I be bound to thee
O my Mother I be bound to thee
O my Mother I be bound to thee
O my Mother I be bound to thee
O my Mother I be bound to thee
O my Mother I be bound to thee

Wright lives as thou as itself
Nor venerates another so
Nor is it possible to thought
A greater than itself to know
The father I cannot love you
More any of my brothers more
I love myself - I love the Lord
That picks up wounds around the door

The Priest set by the altar the altar
The trembling zeal he says he has
The mother follows weep and
The father follows weep and
The mother follows weep and
The father follows weep and
The mother follows weep and
The father follows weep and
The mother follows weep and
The father follows weep and

Secret to secrecy
To young things
The chimney sweeps
A little black thing among the snow
Cry my weep weep in woe
When another father & mother say
They are both gone - my to church to pray

Martin's prophecy
The burning shall flow in another mother
Where two virginites meet together
The holy child must be led in a father
Before two virgins can meet together

Oh standing on the shore high
So what a find is her hand in
One who sets reason up for judge
Of our most holy mystery

And buried him in a holy place
When many had been born before
The weeping parents wept in vain
We look for an end in the other shore

So he changes "thistle" to "flower." Then wishing to make the meaning more definitely symbolical, he deletes "dark" and writes "Earth," and adds the title, "The wild flowers song." It thus becomes a study for "A Little GIRL Lost," and when completed would run:

The wild flowers song

As I wanderd the forest
The green leaves among
I heard a wild flower
Singing a Song

I slept in the Earth
In the silent night
I murmurd my fears
And I felt delight

In the morning I went
As rosy as morn
To seek for new Joy
But O met with scorn

XXIX. But before putting down his pen for the night I picture him turning towards his wife uneasily sleeping. What is the matter with her? She is no longer the Wild Flower she was. Surely it is this accursed man-made world again. Outside the storm may rage, but it is the secret worm of inward storms that penetrates and poisons the bed of joy. 'O, for an escape from the chain that binds us both!' But more even than of his wife, he is now thinking of his theme in the "Visions of the Daughters of Albion," to be engraved actually before "Experience."

And so he writes (the title clearly first):

The sick rose
 O rose thou art sick
 The invisible worm
 That flies in the night
 In the howling storm

Hath found out thy bed
 Of crimson joy
 O dark secret love
 Doth life destroy

The last two lines were afterwards altered in pencil to:

And in dark secret love
 Does thy life destroy

At one time he alters "in" to "her" (in ink) in the above line—a vestige of the mood in which he tried to represent all "dark" love and even all sex love¹ as feminine. The added lines in "Nobodaddy" and the whole of "To Tirzah" are examples of this mood. This has a deep philosophic (or rather perhaps symbolic) meaning, for this Earth is symbolised by the womb.²

XXX. But though "weeping may endure for a night," it yet may be, "joy cometh in the morning." The "howling storm," to the accompaniment of which we may picture Blake writing overnight, is passed. Snow has fallen, and, in the poems that immediately follow, the theme of snow and wintry weather keeps recurring. I do not imagine, however, that Blake necessarily continued immediately below with the poem "Soft Snow." Owing to his habit of continuing in the second column on a level with the beginning of the

¹ Cf. "Why was Cupid a Boy?"

² *Vide supra*, pp. 184 and 185.

poem he was writing, there was a space left at the top of the page (above the verse "There souls of men," &c.), and I cannot help speculating whether it happened thus : Going out early with his notebook and his pencil in his pocket, he began a verse dismissing the gloom of night in this space at the top of the page. It appears to have run somewhat as follows :

Night & War sow mystery & Deceit
Love to faults is always blind

Then, abandoning this scheme, he obliterates the first line and writes a verse developing the theme of the second :

Love to faults is always blind
Always is to joy inclind
Always [*then* Lawless] wingd & unconfind
And breaks all chains from every mind.

XXXI. He had perhaps already reserved a space at the top of the facing page for one more attempt to rescue love from bondage.

Reverting to the "mirtle" theme, he had begun :

O how sick and weary I
Underneath my mirtle lie.

The words are nearly obliterated, but we can still read the "O" and the last words of each line.

XXXII. But whatever the history of those obliterated lines, he now pencils in a verse, heading the right-hand column of this page, that develops the theme of "Deceit," which he had abandoned when he made a complete verse of the line on "Love" (XXX.).

Deceit to secrecy inclined
Always prudish & confind
Never is to interest blind
And chains in fetters every mind.

This he alters several times, leaving it thus:

Deceit to secrecy confind
 Lawful Doubting & refind
 To every thing but interest blind
 And forges fetters for the mind.

XXXIII. Before he finishes the pencil entries (and therefore perhaps his walk), he sees an early chimney-sweep, and writes immediately below the verse on "Deceit" a scathing verse headed "The Chimney Sweeper," no doubt intended as an inverted song of "Innocence":

The Chimney Sweeper .

A little black thing among the snow
 Crying weep weep in notes of woe
 Where are thy father & mother say
 They are both gone up to Church to pray.

XXXIV. There the pencil entries finish, and I imagine Blake returning home, with his mind full of pictures of the melting snow and the black city churches, to write three little verses in ink, the first two in the space still left on the first page, and the third immediately below "The Chimney Sweeper":

I walked abroad in a snowy day
 I askd the soft snow with me to play
 She playd & she melted in all her prime
 Ah that sweet love should be thought a crime.

This, like the verse higher on the page, is a study for "A Little GIRL Lost." The snow is the purity of Innocence and of the Lilly, its melting is the genial spring of the first love-experience. The line substituted in pencil for the last, "And the winter calld it a dreadful

crime" is very unpoetic, but the Winter represents the Father in "A Little GIRL Lost." The title "Soft Snow" is added later.

XXXV. Then in the space still left by the side of "The human Image" at the foot of the page, the black churches, the marriage bond, the war-loving priest, and the oppression of the man-made world super-imposed on Nature's, are all cleared away in the lines to which the title was later added.

An ancient Proverb

Remove away that blackning church
 Remove away that marriage hearse
 Remove away that [place] man of blood
 [Twill] You'll quite remove the ancient curse

XXXVI. The first page is now filled, and it may be that he next turned to the space below the pencilled verse on "The Chimney Sweeper" to write another wintry poem, the title being written quite clearly first:

Merlins prophecy

The harvest shall flourish in wintry weather
 When two virginities meet together

and then very slightly more to the right, as though added later:

The King & the Priest must be tied in a tether
 Before two virgins can meet together

By virginities Blake means two children of innocence in love for the first time, so that the first experience of bodily union follows immediately on the first experience of spiritual union. This again anticipates the dramatic theme of "A Little GIRL Lost."

In the last line "virgins" means, of course, two virginal spirits, a male and a female. The word is used in the same sense in "Earth's Answer." The theme of the verse is that all life will glow to harvest when innocence meets innocence in love's perfect fulfilment, however unsympathetic the outer world; a thing that can happen only when we have overcome the man-made things that oppress natural humanity, a constant theme of this page.

XXXVII. He has still unfilled the first column of the second page reserved for a final edition of the "mirtle" theme, to which he now turns, writing over one of the obliterated lines the title:

To my Mirtle

5. Why should I be bound to thee
6. O my lovely mirtle tree
 Love free love cannot be bound
 To any tree that grows on ground } *deleted*
1. To a lovely mirtle bound
2. Blossoms showring all around
 Like to dung upon the ground
 Underneath my mirtle bound } *deleted*
3. O how sick & weary I
4. Underneath my mirtle lie

The reference to dung upon the ground takes us back to the lines: "So I turnd into a sty/And laid me down among the swine." It means here that the bondage of marriage makes love no better than bestial and foul.

XXXVIII. He then draws a horizontal line and begins a new poem on the theme of Love, but in a new vein. In "The Clod & the Pebble" he set out to show that Love was not always unselfish. Now

he sets out to show that it cannot be so. It must be for ourselves first, just as Thought cannot grasp anything greater than the mind that contains it. But though Blake wishes to voice this view of Love and Thought, he does not wish to endorse it. It is a point of view, but one which as a matter of fact his doctrine of imaginative vision or Christianity supersedes. So he puts the theme into the mouth of innocence, and in the third verse he reverts to the priest theme to engage our dramatic sympathies in favour of a view he does not himself hold, though he probably considers that it must be understood, and even "experienced," if we are ever to understand the truth of poetic love and thought. Before adding the last verse, at the side, he alters the last two lines of the last verse in the first column, but they are in a different script as though to emphasize his indignation. This he successfully vents at last by the remark:

Such things are done on Albions shore

We all know that such things were actually done by men of ancient religions, but Blake here intends to assert that this story is a symbol of our equally infamous intellectual persecutions of the mind of youth to-day.

He subsequently made this into a question, writing: "Are" before the "Such" and crossing it out after "things." It is the first time Blake uses the word Albion, except in a design engraved many years before. There it is clearly more than half symbolic. Here I think it is almost entirely literal. It means "this is what we are all doing, you and I, here in our own country to-day."

Nought loves another as itself
Nor venerates another so
Nor is it possible to Thought
A greater than itself to know

Then [And] father I can not [*then* how can I] love you
 Nor [Or] any of my brothers more
 I love myself so does the bird [*then* I love you like the little bird]
 That picks up crumbs around the door

The Priest sat by and heard the child
 In trembling zeal he siezd his hair
 {The mother followd weeping loud } *del.*
 {O that I such a fiend should bear }
 Then [He] led him by his little coat
 {To show his zealous priestly care} *del.*
 And all admird his priestly care

The weeping child could not be heard
 The weeping parents wept in vain
 {They bound his little ivory limbs} *del.*
 {In a cruel Iron chain} *del.*
 {And [they] strip'd him to his little shirt}
 {& bound him in an iron chain} *in a different script*

And standing on the altar high
 Lo what a fiend is here said he
 One who sets reason up for judge
 Of our most holy mystery

They [And] burnd him in a holy fire [place]
 Where many had been burnd before
 The weeping parents wept in vain
 [Are] Such things are done on Albions shore

The last verse but one was probably written last. Its introduction of the word "judge" enables us to decipher the same word at the head of the opposite page. It is also interesting that the word "Nought," which begins the poem, is reminiscent of the word we

have supposed for the second line of this obliterated fragment (XXVI.) "From nothing who began."

It is apparent that "Merlins prophecy" was already on the page when this poem was written. Otherwise we should have expected Blake to insert the final verse (or verses) as usual alongside the first.

This crowded page contains in three poems the idea of "A Little GIRL Lost" and the practically completed draft of "A Little BOY Lost," which are the most dramatic of the "Songs of Experience." The theme of both is, 'This is the way innocence is lost and sacrificed instead of fertilised and developed by your "virtuous" people in England.'

Before leaving this very interesting and very difficult page, I want to refer again to the two songs—"The Sick Rose" (XXIX.) and "Soft Snow" (XXXIV.), which are an interesting contrast whether they were written in immediate succession, or, as I think, not. The first I take to refer to a real woman whom Blake compares to a rose, the second to the real snow that Blake compares to a woman. Without supposing that Blake actually indulged in a snow bath, I think it shows him in a mood of that intimate sense of physical intercourse with nature, which is so vital to poetry, but for various reasons so rare in Blake. That Blake had it, we get certain hints in the "Poetical Sketches" and in the Felpham letters, and some passages of "Milton." It was at Felpham that he described his wife and sister as "courting Neptune for an Embrace." (September 1800.)

Although I have allowed free play to fancy in attempting to solve the riddle of this double page, and have pictured Blake sleeping and waking, walking abroad and returning to his desk or table, the solution may have to be sought on different lines. The whole page centres upon the themes of liberty, in love and thought,

and the warfare of the Priest and King against innocence. It is possible that Blake at first wrote only "The human Image" on the page and occupied the rest of both pages with sketches, which can still be discerned, but hardly deciphered. Then perhaps he collected (rather than composed) upon this page all the poems on a similar theme as they came to him. There are indications that he did something like this on the next page too.

In any case it is very interesting to speculate whether this page was mainly inspired by two of Blake's friends, Tom Paine, conceived in some sort as "A Little BOY Lost," and Mary Wollstonecraft, suggesting in his mind the various ideas which he was finally to collect in "A Little GIRL Lost."

After the crowded interest of the last two pages we turn over to the next prepared to find an anticlimax. But it is certainly not of less dramatic interest.

Like the foregoing, it is partly in pencil and partly in ink, the first column being entirely in ink and the second column being in pencil with a title added in ink, and two ink emendations. In the middle of the page near the top is written in pencil "The Fairy," which Dr Sampson regards as a substituted title for "The Marriage Ring," although this was not deleted. Mr Plowman regards it as originally applying to "Eternity," which was the title added in ink to a pencil poem in the second column. The fact that neither title is deleted makes it very difficult to look upon "The Fairy" as a substitute for either. A further objection to Dr Sampson's view is that the ink entry above appears to avoid "The Fairy" as though it was already there when Blake began writing the first column. There is no easy solution, but the faint trace of a sketch below¹ suggests that "The Fairy" may have been a title to this, and that

¹ I am afraid this is quite invisible in our facsimile.

both were on the page before it was used for verse. But if this was so it is difficult to understand why he should leave the title when he rubbed out the sketch.

It may be noticed that there is a line at the end of "The Marriage Ring" which has been very effectively obliterated, almost more than any of the other deletions in these poems. The fact is itself of importance as it suggests that Blake himself distinguished between things lightly deleted for artistic reasons and things obliterated as false to his mind. Possibly the sketch here was obliterated for a similar reason, the expressive title being left.

But however we may explain it, this title "The Fairy" is very interesting, and we shall see how it seems to link up the various ideas on one of the most critically important double pages Blake has left. It almost seems as though, having obliterated the sketch, he filled up the page with its exposition in verse, leaving the heading as a sort of general title to the poems.

XXXIX. The ink entries begin in the first column with a passionate description of sunrise.

Day

The day [*then* Sun] arises in the East
 Clothd in robes of blood & gold
 Swords & spears & wrath increast
 All around his ancles [*then* bosom] rolld

Then he added (avoiding the pencil title "The Fairy")

Crownd with warlike fires & raging desires.

XL. Probably before this last line was written, he had written the title "The Marriage Ring" heading a poem in ink of two stanzas.

Those who have read my interpretation of "The Blossom" in

"Innocence" will be familiar with the symbolism of the sparrows and arrows, as swift winged love desires. In the second stanza I have little doubt that the Fairy in the spray is to be interpreted by the illustration to "The Blossom" and his capture (as a butterfly) is to be interpreted by the illustration to "Infant Joy" where the angel has butterfly wings. But in this case the sex symbolism is itself the symbol of something else, that is to say, of the generation of poetic ideas. These come like the bright creatures of another world to impregnate the mind and make it bring forth joy. The 7th plate of "The Gates of Paradise" shows a boy trying to catch fairies (like butterflies) in his hat. There it seems to symbolise the futility of the attempt, and the pencil entry in the second column of this page entitled "Eternity" is the correction of this boyish error. That we shall come to. Our business now is to interpret "The Marriage Ring" which may be paraphrased thus:

The Marriage Ring

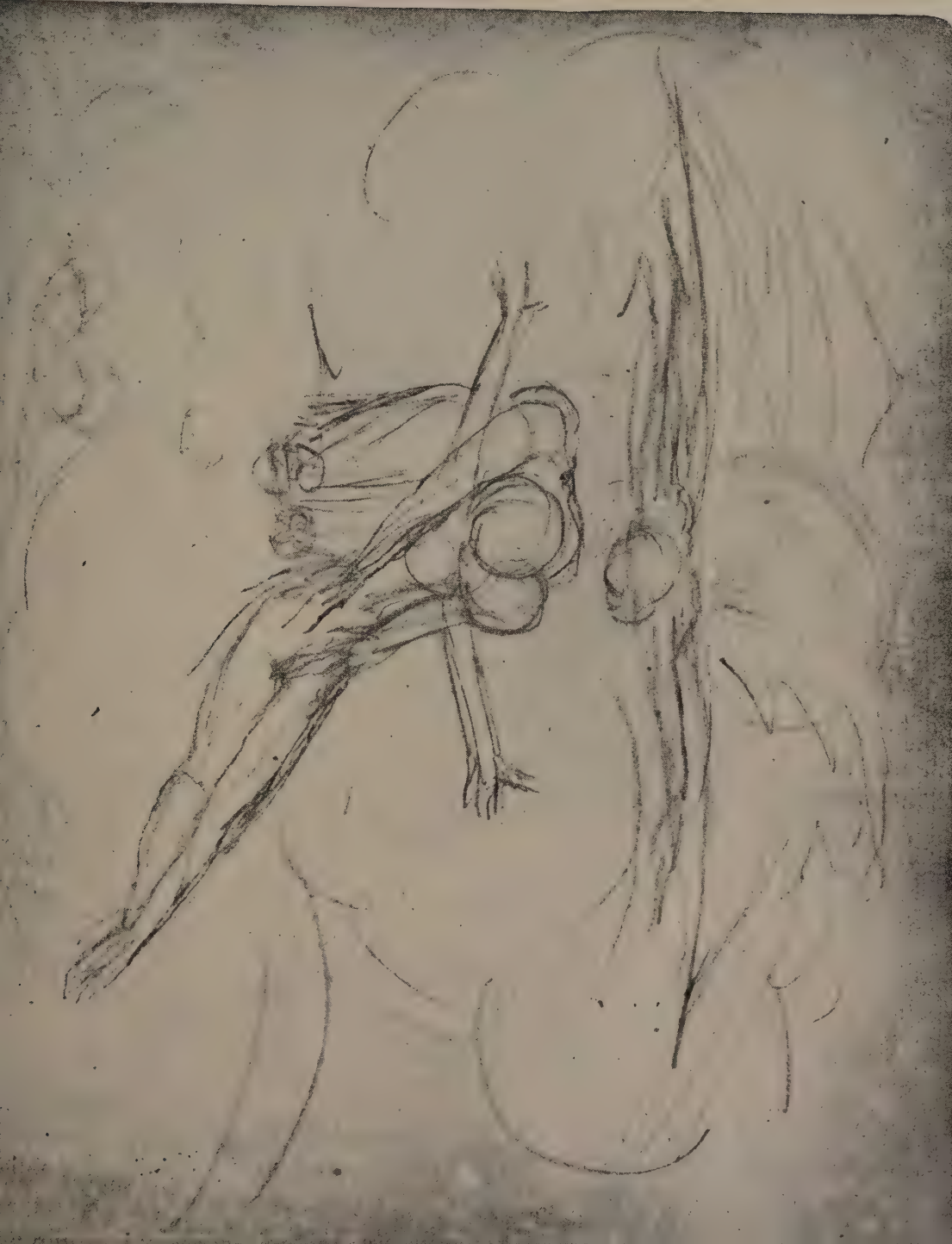
Come hither my sparrows
 My little arrows
 If a tear or a smile
 Will a man beguile
 If an amorous delay
 Clouds a sunshiny day
 If the tread [*then* step] of a foot
 Smites the heart to its root
 'Tis the marriage ring
 Makes each fairy a king

So a fairy sung
 From the leaves I sprung
 He leapt from the spray
 To flee away

The Magic Circle of Marriage

"Come love thoughts winged swift and piercing,—if a man is at the mercy of a single look of joy or sorrow; if life itself goes black when delay intervenes; if the fear of intrusion stuns the deepest soul; where can peace and safety for love be found but in the charmed circle of wedded love, where every winged fancy rules by magic right?"

As this bright thought piped its song to me,
 I leapt from my couch of earth to seize
 (midst the dew of earthly sensation before
 it escaped into the realm of pure idea), this



But in my hat caught
 He soon shall be taught
 Let him laugh let him cry
 Hes my butterfly
 And the marriage ring } *del.*
 Has
 For Ive pulld out the sting
 Of the marriage ring

precious thought. Now it is captured. Verse has secured it forever. The idea may rejoice or struggle within my mind, but it can't ever again escape me. I've got it home. From conception it has arisen into new life. It is my butterfly, my wing'd, my living flower of love. Surely have I robbed marriage of its bitterness.

We have all of us jumped out of bed (or considered doing so) to jot down a bright idea before it faded. And I have sometimes liked to imagine that the "leaves" from which Blake "sprung" were like the "bank" in *Entry V*, his actual marriage bed. But in any case Blake has at last found reconciliation between Eros and marriage,¹ and though he shows a strong desire not to go back upon the various and sometimes conflicting points of view he has expressed, he never again writes a new poem against marriage. His desire henceforth is to exalt or soften, rather than to remove its bonds. In his next great work he glorifies the idea of marriage by using it in the title of his attempt to reconcile the contraries of heaven and hell; and Beulah (Marriage) was to become his name for Threefold Vision.

The other ink entries are interesting as showing Blake's deter-

¹ We get the whole story of the MS. series up to this point (which is its culmination), made into a poem written later in the Pickering MS., "William Bond." But that poem is more general and less autobiographical than the story as it reveals itself in these pages of the MS. book. The Church, the Fairies, and the Angels of that poem are all familiar symbols to students of this MS.—but the last have become (since "The Marriage") almost the same as the Priests here. The emphasis placed on Mary's discovery that she is laid on the Right side of William's bed, is the symbol of his worship of her, and it is this worship which endows her with the dancing love-thoughts (fairies) she had been wanting in before. The "sister" on his "left" probably represents the bodily side of things (compare Plate 16, "Gates of Paradise": "I have said to the Worm: Thou art my mother & my sister"). The name William Bond stands, no doubt, for William bound.

mination not to admit puritan or ascetic ideals. He may have come to terms with marriage, but this does not mean that he dethrones "Desire." Desire is for Blake a thing like Joy, fundamental and spiritual, which marriage must somehow enshrine in the soul, not imprison in the flesh.

XLI. In the next poem I take the sword to represent the "Thou shalt not" of the Priest,¹ and the sickle to symbolise the instrument by which love's harvest is gathered, possibly suggesting by its shape the crescent moon, which so often stands for the sweetness of woman's world of love.

The poem means that law cannot defeat love, devastate as it may:

The sword sung on the barren heath
The sickle in the fruitful field
The sword he sung a song of death
But could not make the sickle yield

XLII. Blake then burst out against negative virtue:

Abstinence sows sand all oer
The ruddy limbs & flowring² hair
But Desire Gratified
Plants fruits of life & beauty there

He goes on to describe the reconciliation of "Desire" with his love of a wedded wife:

¹ Cf. Plate 8, "Gates of Paradise," where the father's sword certainly represents repressive discipline.

² Swinburne and Keynes read this word as "flaming"—Plowman as "flowing." I am sure it is f, l, o, w—but I think the word may possibly be Blake's way of writing flowering—which seems conceivable when we think of his association of flowers with sex, and the expression in "A Little GIRL Lost," "the blossoms of my hoary hair."

In a wife I would desire
 What in whores is always found
 The lineaments of Gratified desire.

I think he probably intended to add a line to complete the quatrain and to rhyme with (the very unconvincing) line two.

XLIV. The second column begins with the first pencil entry, a piece of practical philosophy, reminding us of the catching and caging of the fairies and elves to be described shortly in the "Motto":

If you [catch] trap the moment before its ripe
 The tears of repentance youll¹ certainly wipe
 But if once you let the ripe moment go
 You [ll] can never wipe off the tears of woe.

XLV. He then scores a horizontal line and writes another verse on the same theme of catching and caging joys:

He who binds² to himself a joy
 Does the winged life destroy
 But he who [just *del.*] kisses the joy as it flies
 Lives in [an eternal] eternity's sun rise.

The importance of this beautiful verse is, I think, even greater than appears. Hitherto Blake has hardly ever used the words Eternity or Eternal in a good sense in his verse—though he speaks of "Eternal bane" in "Earth's Answer" (and "snows eternal" in the "French Revolution"), and in his prose marginalia he speaks of "A Vision of

¹ This word appears to have been "yould" at one time, and there are several obliterated words for the second. It is possible he tried:

"If you caught the moment before its ripe
 The tears of repentance yould certainly wipe."

² This word looks like "bonds" and has generally been read as "bends." But Mr Plowman points out to me that in the transcript (*vide infra*, p. 285) the dot of the "i" can be seen, and the word "bind" is much more characteristic of Blake. The line was originally; "He who binds himself to a joy."

the Eternal Now," while in Plate 13 of "The Gates of Paradise" the *thought* of Eternity seems clearly present.¹

But I conceive the mood of happiness, following the discovery of a synthesis of his desires, opened a new era in his spiritual history. He had, in fact, entered the state "Beulah," which is to say "Marriage"² or threefold vision, though it is some years before he calls it this.

Yet it is far more than a reconciliation of marriage and unfettered love that he has found in this verse. It is the complete reconciliation of desire and imagination, which sustains the creative and poetic life of man. I believe in fact that Blake has grasped the supreme truth that our visions enable us to realise joys which still transcend vision. We create, and we create by our poetic intercourse with life; but there is always that which our creation cannot grasp, and it is this that gives them life. I always think there was some such thought in the description of Enitharmon as the Wife of Los in "Jerusalem" (14¹⁴), "His Emanation, yet his Wife till the sleep of death is past." The woman a man loves is ever for him a vision, a creature of his own poetic mind, and yet something he can never grasp in this world, something too real and too natural, or, as it were, too simple.

If Blake was consistent about this whole group of symbols—Fairies, Blossoms, Butterflies, and the capture and kissing of Joys—he means that the selfish passion which strives to seize and subject the whole of another's life (as, for instance, in the Pebble's "Hell") merely slays another's life. But the touch of love is regenerative, and as the

¹ It was long after that he wrote in "The Keys of the Gates," "My Eternal Man set in Repose." He uses the word Eternal in "Thel," but Thel being a pre-natal spirit, the word has not the same rich meaning it has here.

² Mr Sloss and Mr Wallis say (vol. ii. p. 134) "The name of the state 'Beulah' was probably derived not from Isaiah lxii. 4, but from Bunyan's 'Pilgrim's Progress,' Part I." But this does not mean, of course, that either Blake or Bunyan was unaware that the word signifies Marriage.

womb captures a messenger of joy from "another," and thereby becomes pregnant with new life, so the mind may capture a germ of joy or emotion, that shall arise in new vision and song.

Compare for instance the two following:

Every Tear from Every Eye
Becomes a Babe in Eternity
This is caught by Females bright
And returnd to its own delight.

and:

Daughters of Beulah! Muses who inspire the Poets Song
Record the journey of immortal Milton thro' your Realms
Of terror & mild moony lustre, in soft sexual delusions
. . . Come into my hand . . . descending . . .
From out the Portals of my Brain, where . . .
The Eternal Great Humanity Divine, planted his Paradise
And in it caus'd the Spectres of the Dead to take sweet forms . . .

XLVI. After these verses there comes a title, and the first line of a poem, that Blake had either written elsewhere (as the "&c" indicates), or intended to write. It is called "The Kid," and seems to have been a counterpart to "The Lamb" of Innocence:

Thou little kid didst play &c

Perhaps Blake felt that "The Tyger" was too big a thing to play that part. I can only conceive the reason for Blake introducing the title here that the theme had something to do with the next poem.

XLVII. On a previous morning, as we have supposed, Blake met "A little black thing among the snow." This morning he meets another "Little Vagabond" who exhibits a kind of capricious innocence (like the Kid's) among the slums and taverns. The theme is still of wintry coldness and of the Church.

The little [pretty] Vagabond

Dear Mother Dear Mother the church is cold
 But the alehouse is healthy & pleasant & warm
 Besides I can tell where I am usd well
 Such usage in heaven makes all go to hell

—a line reminiscent of *Entry VII*: “So I turnd into a sty / And laid me down among the swine”—but the line was later deleted in ink as being doubtless too cynical for the little vagabond, and, written over the line, the kindly but rather clumsy:

The poor parsons with wind like a blown bladder swell

The poem continues:

But if at the Church they would give us some Ale
 And a pleasant fire our souls to regale
 We'd sing and we'd pray all the livelong day
 Nor ever once wish from the Church to stray

Then the parson might preach & drink & sing
 And we'd be as happy as birds in the spring
 And Modest dame Lurch who is always at Church
 Would not have bandy children nor fasting nor birch

Then God like a father that joys for [*later rejoicing*] to see
 His children as pleasant & happy as he
 Would have no more quarrel with the Devil or the Barrel
 [But shake hands & kiss him & thered be no more hell] *del.*
 But kiss him & give him both [*fire or food del.*] drink & apparel

The last line on the page was the last of the poem, “The little Vagabond,” but when it was deleted the revised line was written alongside it at the bottom of the first column, where there was still room.

The interest of the illustration facing this page is scarcely less

than that of the poems. The figure embraced by the "Father" appears to me to have been originally that of a woman and the design to have a significance similar to those on Plates 96 and 99 of "Jerusalem"; which may be described (inadequately) as "Thought's" discovery of "Jerusalem" in the "Earth." It here represents the reconciliation of "Earth" with the "Father of the Ancient Men," but in place of Christ, the Spirit hovers above and (like the Marriage Ring) holds back the phantoms of darkness.¹

It is also interesting as showing the connection of the little Vagabond with the rest of the page. Although quite unlike in composition, the idea is identical with the wonderful illustration of God like a father kissing the Devil in the engraved poem in "Experience."

The thought of reconciliation is stamped almost everywhere on this wonderful double page.

The climax of interest has perhaps been reached in these two pages, but we turn over to find one of Blake's greatest and maturest poems, and one of the most beautiful and characteristic of all his designs.² I like to think of the design as coming first and as recording and ennobling the new reconciliation, not only of himself and his wife, but not less of his own love and thought.

Though the features are poor and the design slight, its dignity and poetry are singularly impressive.

This page also is in two columns, the first written in ink and the second in pencil, but in this case it is the pencil that clearly avoids the ink and must, therefore, be presumed later.

It begins with a continuation of the last theme of the ink entries on the previous page with the title:

¹ The invention was afterwards used in one of the finest of the "Paradise Lost" designs.

² In this sketch of a nude man and woman, Burne-Jones clearly found the suggestion of the figure of Adam and Eve in his "Sixth Day of Creation."

XLVIII.

The Question Answerd

What is it men [of] in women do require
 The lineaments of Gratified Desire
 What is it women do [of]¹ in men require
 The lineaments of Gratified Desire

Blake certainly means to say here that the joys of love must be mutual (for there is no joy worthy of the name that is not given as well as received); but he probably means further to assert that Love's perfect nature is to banish, not to foster, Jealousy, by which men and women are tormented in their blindness.

(XXXIII.) He then draws a long line and writes two additional verses for "The Chimney Sweeper." These refer back to a theme of Innocence, that the seeds of happiness are within, so that even the little Chimney Sweeper may be happy. But Blake returns to this theme only to answer it. For true as it may be, it does not remove the guilt of the parents nor of the "Priest & King."

Because I was happy upon the heath
 And smild among the winters wind [*then* snow]
 They clothed me in the clothes of death
 And taught me to sing the notes of woe

And because I am happy & dance & sing
 They think they have done me no injury
 And are gone to praise God & his Priest & King
 Who wrap themselves up in our misery
 [*Later*, Who make up a heaven of our misery]

¹ As the facsimiles are there for the reader to refer to, I have not considered it necessary to be consistent as to bracketing Blake's first or second thoughts. Where I am anxious to call attention to the way Blake originally wrote it down, I bracket the second thought (always putting it after the original word). But in this and other cases I select the final version, bracketing the original *before* it.

The Question Answered

What is it men ^{ing} of women do require
The lineaments of gratified desire
What is it women do ⁱⁿ of men require
The lineaments of gratified desire

Because I was happy upon the earth
And smelt among the winter wind now
They clothed me in the clothes of death
And taught me to sing the notes of woe

And because I am happy & dance & sing

They think they have done me no injury
And are gone to praise God & his Christ & his
I was armed he came in vain

~~Who were the members of my misery~~ But the line of your face fled

Who mark up a heart of my misery
Come hither my boy tell me what thou hast seen

A fool laughed in a religious frame

The ~~small~~ ^{kind} countess of a merry heart

The rubies & pearls of a loving eye

The idle ~~indulgent~~ ^{secret} ~~is~~ ^{is} can bring to the mark

Nor the ~~curious~~ ^{secret} board up in his treasury

An answer to the paragon

Why of the sheep do you not learn peace

Because I don't want you to leave my place

Holy Thursday

Is this a holy then to see

In a rich & fruitful land

Babes reduced to misery

Fed with cold & usurious hand

Is that trembling only, a song

Can it be a song of joy

And so great a number poor

In a land of poverty

I dreamt & dream what can it mean
And that I was a maiden green
Guccied by an angel met
Willst wor was never by night

And I slept both night & day
And he wiped my tears away
And I slept both day & night
And he'd from him my misery

So he took his wings & fled
Then the moon bloode rose red
I drew my heart & soul my fears
With ten thousand words & spears

Soon my angel came again
And I was armed he came in vain
But the line of your face fled
And grey hairs were on my face

The look of love alarming

Because tis filled with

But the look of soft dice

Shall wear the worn line

~~Why then brother~~

Soft deceit & idleness

These are branties & want of

and their sun does never shine

And their faces are black & lean

(As) their ways are full with thorn

Tis dismal woe for them

But whenever the sun does shine

And whenever the rain does fall

Babes can never hunger there

Nor poverty the mind appall

XLIX. Blake then continues almost without break:

Come hither my boy tell me what thou seest there
A fool tangled in a religious snare

which he subsequently separates from the above by a horizontal line and crowds in the title "Lacedemonian Instruction."

I do not know what this title means, but I imagine it to mean instruction without books. The boy is, I suppose, the Chimney Sweeper looking at the Priest or his parents in the Church. But his description of what he sees reminds one of the illustration to "The Human Abstract."

L. He then scores an emphatic horizontal line as though to dismiss the image, and reverts to the theme of inward happiness, later adding the beautiful title:

Riches

The countless¹ gold of a merry heart
The rubies & pearls of a loving eye
The [idle man] indolent never can bring to the mart
Nor the [cunning] Secret hoard up in his treasury

LI. He then goes back to the parson, and scoring another horizontal line, writes:

An answer to the parson

Why of the sheep do you not learn peace
Because I dont want you to shear my fleece

¹ This word is preceded by two deletions, but I think their only significance is as showing that Blake was composing as he wrote. He seems to have written first "The the countl," and then to have crossed out the superfluous "the" and with it the beginning of the word he was finally to use.

The first line is, of course, the parson's question and the second the poet's (or the vagabond's) answer.

LII. Blake is thus led to a deeper consideration of the beautiful lyric "Holy Thursday" of "Innocence." Is there anything good in the church for these little vagabonds and sweepers and outcasts that we should take delight in seeing them enter it? The title is clearly written, and is then followed by two hot swift verses which take him to the foot of the page, so that he begins the third verse (as was his wont) by the side of the first, and the fourth by the second.

Holy Thursday

Is this a holy thing to see
In a rich & fruitful land
Babes reduced to misery
Fed with cold & usurous hand

Is that trembling cry, a song
Can it be a song of joy
And so great a number poor
Tis a land of poverty

And their sun does never shine
And their fields are bleak & bare
And their ways are filled with thorns
Tis eternal winter there

But where'er the sun does shine
And where'er the rain does fall
Babe can never hunger there
Nor poverty the mind appall

LIII. There remains the space above, for a second column. This may have been written next morning. It is in pencil and speaks of

a dream. The poem is not difficult, and is explained in its engraved form in "Experience," but as we shall see, it derives a further interest from its position here. It runs:

I dreamt a dream what can it mean
And that I was a maiden queen
Guarded by an angel mild
Witless woe was neer beguild

And I wept both night & day
And he wiped my tears away
And I wept both day & night
And hid from him my hearts delight

So he took his wings & fled
Then the morn blusht rosy red
I dried my tears & armd my fears
With ten thousand shields & spears

Soon my angel came again
I was armd he came in vain
[But] For the time of youth was fled
And grey hairs were on my head

This poem is the last but one of those he was to engrave in "Experience," and its position so near the end of the MS. series justifies us in seeking for some special significance, which we shall shortly explain.

LIV. The little verse that follows shows the relation of the "dream" to a persistent theme running through the series: the theme that love must be expressed not with all the terrific intensity of its feeling but with a sweet assumption of indifference.

The look of love alarms
 Because tis filld with fire
 But the look of soft deceit
 Shall win the lovers hire

[Which are beauties sweetest dress] *doubly del.*

Soft deceit & idleness

[These are beauties sweetest dress] *del.*¹

LV. We are now very near the end. Blake has reached the place in the book where the designs for "The Gates of Paradise," begun at the other end of the book, begin to appear.² So as not to trespass upon the first (*i.e.* the last) of these, he writes a poem of diminutive lines down the margin of the page, the last of the "Songs of Experience," here. It is the philosophic poem on life and death which he called "The Fly" when etched. Blake was perhaps exhausted after the storm of inspiration which had produced several of the most wonderful poems in our language, and it was natural that his mind should turn to the frailty of life and the insignificance of the little joys of art and appetite which make up our fleeting tale of happiness. Its mastership of form is a necessary element in its mastership of thought, for it makes the great sum of earthly being, with its joys, its woe, its thought, its life, seem a diminutive little rivulet of song.

Woe alas my guilty hand	} <i>deleted</i>
Brushd across thy summer joy	
All thy gilded painted pride	
Shattered fled	

¹ But restored in the later entry, *vide infra*, p. 285.

² The one on this page is hardly discernible in our facsimile. The legend beneath is "Begone & trouble me no more." There is also a list of first lines or titles, bracketed together and marked "on 1 Plate." These are not all legible. The first may possibly be "The cut worm"—the second "Are not"—the third "in improvement," and the fourth "If you trap the," and may be the germ of the Proverbs of Hell.

Woe-ates my guilty-land
Crushes a-oft the summer joy
N't the field painted pride
Shed its
pettle his
his summer play
his guilty-land his helpless hand
Takes crushes away

He that wins
Forgets the blow
And does no more
But so do thou

2 Am not I
A fly like thee
Pract not thou
I mean like me

3 For I'da'nce
Am d'anced & say
Till some (tho' hand
Shall b'oud my way

5 Then am I
A happy fly
If I live
Or if I die

~~My~~ ^{My} life is like
 The strong ^{the} breath
 But the wind
 Of thought or death,

49 Thought is like
and strength & breath
and the want of
of thought is death

Alto to the song of Innocence & of Experience
The Good are attracted by others perceptions
And think not for themselves
Till Experience teaches them to catch
And to cage the Innocent & True

And then the Heretic begins to snarl
And the Hypocrite to howl
And all his good Friends show their private end
And the Lark is known from the Owl.

1. Little fly
Thy summer play
My guilty hand [*then* thoughtless hand]
Hath brushd away

The cut worm
Forgives the plow
And dies in peace
And so do thou

} *deleted*

2. Am not I
A fly like thee
Or art not thou
A man like me

3. For I dance
And drink & sing
Till some blind hand
Shall brush my wing

5. Then am I
A happy fly
If I live
Or if I die

4. Thought is life
And strength & breath
But the want [of]
Of Thought is death
- } *deleted*

4. If Thought is life
And strength & breath
And the want [of]
Of Thought is death

LVI. But that is not quite all. Blake has at last brought a great artistic conception to the birth; and writing right across the foot of the page, he indites the words:

Motto to the Songs of Innocence & of Experience

Below there follow two verses describing the contrary "States," not in Blake's highest poetic vein, and never engraved or published by him. But the verses are useful to the exegetist in explaining Blake's mind and linking up several of the ideas floating about in the manuscript series.

The real importance of the entry, however, is as showing that Blake had now conceived the idea of writing a complementary book to the "Songs of Innocence" under the title, the "Songs of Experience." The line with which he crosses the four "Ts" occurring in the first three words is a kind of triumphant stroke lifting for the end of the line and intended more or less to rule off the poem, but not, I think, originally meant for that purpose. In the next line he makes another emphatic crossing to three t's.

Motto to the Songs of Innocence & of Experience

The Good are attracted by Mens perceptions
And Think not for themselves
Till Experience teaches them to catch
And to Cage the Fairies & Elves

The innocent are moved by instinctive perceptions and desires, and are not influenced by reflection or independent thought. But experience teaches us the need to get control of our joys and sorrows by exercising our independent minds.

And then the Knave begins to snarl
And the Hypocrite to howl
And all his good Friends show their private ends
And the Eagle is known from the Owl

When we analyse the world we realise that it is not all good—the child learns that his mentors (parents and priests) are not always true friends, and are not all disinterested. He learns to distinguish between the men and thoughts of the Day, and the men and thoughts of the Night; the eagle and the owl.

The entries are now getting mixed up with those written from the other end of the book, which are the other way up. The one on this particular page is a fragment of the Everlasting Gospel. But there are still several entries written the same way up as all we have been considering.

LVII. The first is in the middle at the top of the page opposite the "Motto." It is a rhymed epigram of two lines, the only one Blake ever wrote against a woman. He is for ever using the "female" as a type of the earthly and unregenerate, but his personal relations with the opposite sex appear to have been uniformly chivalrous and kind. It can hardly be an accident that almost the last entry in this manuscript series is one which may be taken as dismissing a lady from his regard. The storm began with the "jealousy," alleged or real, justified or unfounded, of Blake's wife. We have seen it turn many corners, the Lilly, the Tyger, the Marriage Ring, to end, perhaps, at last in a somewhat scathing summary of its innocent or guilty provocation.

Her whole Life is an Epigram smart smooth & nobly pen'd
Platted quite neat to catch applause with a sliding noose at the end.

LVIII. The next poem, the last of the whole series, seems to refer to the subject of the epigram, but it is written in a more sympathetic vein—not as though to approve, but certainly to interpret and forgive:

2. O I cannot cannot find
The undaunted courage of a Virgin Mind
For Early I in love was crost
Before my flower of love was lost
1. An old maid early eer I knew
Ought but the love that on me grew
And now Im coverd oer & oer
And wish that I had been a Whore

This is a searching little poem, whether we take the verses in the order of their composition or as numbered. The heroine on the verge of womanhood had known love without hope, without fulfilment. By this experience she was already committed to a life of celibacy, only knowing love as an offer of herself (a flower) without return. And now the longing for its return so overwhelms her that she would that she had offered it without any terms at all.

Lastly, it may or may not be significant that on the last page of "An Island in the Moon" (1787 or 1788), where Quid is discussing his illuminated printing (afterwards adopted for the "Songs" and all Blake's prophetic books), he says rather abruptly to the lady who is encouraging and flattering him, "I think your face is like that noble beast the Tyger"; he speaks of himself as having a "Goat's face," and is perhaps comparing himself to a satyr or Pan. But it is at least as probable that Blake is making the satirical suggestion (in the light vein of the "Island") that the poet is about to become the lady's prey. Yet in Blake's mouth the word "Tyger" must certainly have been used as a compliment, even if a somewhat terrible one. Pure speculation as it must always remain, it may be that there was some woman in whom he found a great and terrible power, and whose ideas and personality long haunted and inspired him. Another possible light on the question is to be found in the strange poem

1871

1891

1900

7. 1941

1940

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and dates, which appears to be a record of some kind. The names are written in a cursive script, and the dates are in a more formal, printed style. The list is organized into two columns, with names on the left and dates on the right.

Robertson, J. W.

177

1. 18 20 100

1941

1870

18

[Faint handwritten notes at the bottom of the page]

11

1891

Payable to the order of the Treasurer of the
the said University of the said

And I am to keep the papers & so
about the present land.

Fourth bridge 1/2 m. to mile

And soon he saw the pestilence

From Sept to Dec 1897

Layette built the bridge across
the town of iron bound

But much Fayette will live for
 4) months then around 1

(1) Let the Products Name be opened

2 With many an alluring dance
Lest I sit M. P. H. H. H.

3% and the ~~percentage~~ who the
and the banked 2 in 1

17 1/2 inch wide and 12 inch long.

As soon as he heard these tidings he

Don't know what life is like

The ~~same~~ made for both cases
of the ~~same~~ kind.

Fasted & belated - long D

Mr. [unclear] & [unclear] & [unclear] & [unclear]

Army but at will as was of King
~~and the army~~

Hadst they not been in

~~The Book of the House of the People~~

35 Then he saw a great path

6 To tell the people I am both
But I have said this must as

They shall have a piece of a picture

17

The Library of France just bought the
P. H. B. edition of the *Œuvres* of Voltaire.

But the hearty people across the

Will not submit to the protest of
B. & C. & D. & E. & F. & G. & H. & I. & J. & K. & L. & M. & N. & O. & P. & Q. & R. & S. & T. & U. & V. & W. & X. & Y. & Z.

There is just such a one at home

W. a great many such as glass and the

~~Scapelle Scapelle throat bought & sold~~
~~For well I see they have~~

~~of the one category for the~~
~~the other~~

[Faint handwritten signature]

pencilled on the last page but one, "I dreamt a dream." Is it possible that Blake, looking back on his bitter reaction in this MS. against a too simple-minded innocence, had waked as from a dream to realise that he was not truly himself when he felt like that? It may have been some woman he felt had possessed his mind. On the other hand, it is as likely to have been the "female" in himself, his prisoned "Earth," his "generated" self, of which he spoke.

On the next page Blake collects several verses on "Desire" (already written, *vide supra*, XLVII., LII., XXXIX., XXXIV.), and the condition of its satisfaction, under the heading "Several Questions Answerd," written indistinctly in pencil.

Several Questions Answerd

4. What is it men in women do require
The lineaments of Gratified Desire
What is it women do in men require
The lineaments of Gratified Desire

2. The look of love alarms
Because tis filld with fire
But the look of soft deceit
Shall Win the lovers hire

3. Soft deceit & Idleness
These are Beautys sweetest dress

1. He who binds to himself a joy
Doth the winged life destroy
But he who kisses the joy as it flies
Lives in Eternitys sun rise

5. An ancient Proverb

Remove away that blackning church
 Remove away that marriage hearse
 Remove away that — of blood
 Youll quite remove the ancient curse.

I cannot myself profess to have deciphered the numbers of the verses, except 2 and 3. But if Mr Keynes's reading is right, as I think it must be, the gain in interest from exchanging the first and fourth "answers" is considerable. The verse, elsewhere called "Eternity," instead of coming in awkwardly near the end, thus becomes the main theme. The series then says, "Do not grasp and crush your joys, approach them gently as though you did not intend to catch them. Then since after all our joys are mutual, and in one another's happiness, what should hinder their fulfilment, could we but get rid of the law that darkens and kills?"

The long, strange poem, "La Fayette," partly written the same way up as the poems of the "Experience" MS., really opens a new chapter in Blake's thought and need not here concern us.

Almost the only other entry in the book written this way up is much nearer the other end of the book, and probably unconnected with this series:

I have given [*then* give] you the end of a golden string
 Only wind it into a ball
 It will lead you in at Heavens Gate
 Built in Jerusalems wall.

I have little left to say. The reader who has followed this study will realise that without such an examination of the MS. the "Songs of Experience" must remain prevailingly a book of disillusion and revolt, unsatisfying not only as a sequel to the radiant beauty of the

"Songs of Innocence," but in itself. As poetry it is the right selection from the Songs in the MS., and the notes of triumph are all there; but they are merged, if not lost, in things they appear little connected with. By diligently tracking Blake's thought through these wonderful pages, we realise that the "Songs of Experience" are the episodes of a great spiritual fight that had been already won, before he began to engrave them, and there is scarcely a line in them which does not rise into new significance.

But in order to do this, I have been obliged to give some rein to a faculty which it is hazardous to exercise in the very presence of its supreme master. The imagination is Blake's own realm; but the more Blake soars, it may be said, and said truly, the more careful must his critics be to stand four-square upon the ground of verifiable and demonstrable fact. I believe the two attitudes are not irreconcilable, and I shall perhaps be forgiven if I appeal to another master of imagination, though a strangely different one from Blake.

Browning, with the little "Old Yellow Book" in his hand, seeking not art for its own sake, but life and truth for theirs, built up as an amalgam of fact and fiction his immortal vision of Pompilia and her rescuer; then, dissolving away the alloy, he left us his golden Ring fashioned of pure truth. My part has been an infinitely humbler one, for the gold was already pricelessly wrought by a great master's hand. But now let the alloy in these pages also be dissolved. Let every speculation I have advanced as to the times and places and occasions be washed out, and yet I believe no critic will ever be able to go back upon the conception of these MS. jottings as a connected human document, the more revealing for the fact that it was never intended to be revealed.

INDEX

A

"A" and "The" in Blake's titles, 58
 above is within —, 69, 100
 Abstinence, 270
 Abstract, "Human —" (S.E.), 277
 Act of Creation, 193
 Adam & Eve, 211
 „ „ clothed by Angel of Divine Presence,
 170
 Additions to catalogue 1810, 40
 „ in ink not engraved, 74
 Adolescence, 141
 Age, future —, 164
 Age of Gold, 163
 „ of Reason, 178 n.
 Agrippa's "Occult Philosophy," 132
 Albion's Daughters, Visions of —, 161 n., 257
 Albion's shore, 263
 Albion's Rocky Shore, 51, 81, 204
 allegorical abode, 109 f.
 Allegory hidden Sublime poetry, 128
 America, "The —," 213
 American War of Independence, 242
 Ampus &, 67
 Anatomy Horrible, 124 n.
 Ancient Bard, Voice of —, 63, 189 n.
 Ancient of Days, 193
 Ancient Proverb, see Proverb
 Angel, "The —," 48, 71, 183 n.
 „ „ has butterfly wings, 123
 „ „ MS., 279, 284
 Angel of Divine Presence, 69
 „ „ clothing Adam & Eve, 170
 Angels in Blake's system, 224
 Angel's key, Platonic thought, 109
 Angelico, Fra —, 28
 Angelo, Michel —, 28
 Anger with friend, 227
 Annunciation, chamber of —, 126
 „ scene, 123
 "Another," the word —, 95
 Answer to parson, see Parson
 Animal life represented by vegetable life, 71

Archaic thought, frankness of —, 125
 Architect, Musician an —, 150
 "Arrow" & "cradle," significance of, 128
 Arrows — — — — — sparrows, 268
 Art, labours of —, 113
 "Auguries of Innocence," 127 n.

B

Babe, Tear becomes —, 127 n., 273
 Bank of love, 269
 Bard, "The —," 237
 Bard, "Voice of the Ancient —," 62, 189 n.
 Beasts of prey, the passions, 116
 Beasts, wild —, passions, 129
 „ sex-love, 71
 Beauty, "Naked — displayed, 33
 Behmen, Jacob —, 150 n.
 "Beulah," 30, 269, 272 n.
 „ Daughters of —, 273
 Bibles, etc., causes of errors, 179
 Biblical name "Tirzah," 183 n.
 Binyon, Mr Lawrence —, 49, 52
 Bird of Calvary, 126, 198
 Birds, male element, 126
 Birth, tragedy of, 123
 Black Boy, "The Little —," 39, 49, 114, 134,
 178 n., 180
 „ bow, 163 n.
 Blake, Catherine, see Catherine
 Blake, Robert —, see Robert
 Blake, William and Catherine, 238; childlike, 20 ff.;
 childlikeness self imposed, 63; not writing for
 children in "Experience," 161; "Nonesuch —,"
 43 n.; as master of the diminutive, 213; good to
 steal from (Fuseli), 153; the Good Man, 29; on
 the Lord's Prayer (Dr Clarke), 147 n.; and mar-
 riage, 29 ff.; and nature, 265; prophet not pre-
 ceptor, 32; "The Real —" (Ellis), 135 n.; &
 his brother Robert, 113; the mystic, 27; and
 Wordsworth, 27 f.; writing to get rid of some-
 thing, 216; career affected by "The Blossom,"
 128; fidelity, 236; genius held insane, 28; genius

- new quality in, 213; steps haunted by genius, 47 n. f.; greater prophecies, 22 f.; home, Non-conformist —, 215; house across the Thames, 210; inconsistencies, 31; indifference to being understood, 21; madness, Mr Chesterton &, 42 f.; J. H. Wicksteed in "Quest," 43 n.; MSS., 40 ff.; MS. his workshop, 42; theories on love & marriage, 168; modernity, 19; own copy of the Songs, 189 n.; own order of the Songs, 48; "pamphlet" in "A Little GIRL," 170; philosophy, 19; poems, pictures, & pictures, poems, 96; prophecies, 22 f.; prophetic indignation, 168; symbolism, 36; symbolism, water in —, 51; system, Angels in —, 224; Titles "A" & "The" in —, 58; Titles, block capitals in —, 69
 Bliss cannot be consummated except on earth, 134 n.
 Block capitals in the titles, 69
 Blossom, "The ——" 23, 49, 62, 63, 98, 114, 125, 128, 166 n., 198, 205
 " " effects on Blake's career, 128
 " " illustrations to, 128
 " " associated with "The Lamb," 128
 " " and other songs, 49
 Blossom, symbolism of —, 122 & n.
 Blossoms, 231
 " Fairies, Butterflies, 272
 " fury of my wind blight, 228
 " of my hoary hair, 270 n.
 Bodily growth under parental tree, 117
 Body, after death of, 182 n.
 Body not distinct from Soul, 128, 151
 Body, "Raised a Spiritual —," 186
 Bond, "William ——" 135 n., 269 n.
 Bow, black —, 163 n.
 BOY lost, "A Little ——" 20 & n., 39, 115, 160, 172 & n., 266
 " " " " basic theme of, 162
 " " " " MS. version, 172 n.
 Boy lost, "The Little —," 38, 39, 46, 61, 96, 114, 116, 265
 Boy found, "The Little —," 38 f., 46, 61 f.
 " " in experience of own thought, 125 & n.
 Boys & Girls in the Songs, 39
 Brain where Humanity Divine planted Paradise, 273
 British lion, 244
 " Museum, see Museum
 Browning, 287
 Bunyan, 28
 " Pilgrim's Progress, 272 n.
 Burne-Jones, 275 n.
 Burns, 30
 Butterflies, Blossoms, Fairies, 272
 butterfly, wings of —, 126
 butterfly wings, Angel has, 123
 butterfly symbol resurrection, 123
 Byron, 30
 C
 Caged bird ("The School Boy"), 203
 Caging Fairies, 83 f.
 Calvary, bird of, 126, 198
 Capitals, block, in titles, 69
 Carey, Miss, 50
 " copy, illustration of "Infant Joy," 75
 " " "To Tirzah" not in ———, 183
 Catalogue 1810, additions to, 40
 Catherine Blake, 161
 " her achievement & Blake's, 56
 " & Blake, 238
 " 's colouring (of Plates), 75
 " emanation, 33
 Cattle represent Experience, 172
 Chamber of annunciation, 126
 Chapel all of Gold, 157
 Cherub seated on parental stem, 127
 Chesterton & Blake's madness, 42 f.
 Child on cloud, see Cloud
 " under false guardianship, 105
 Childlikeness of Blake, 20 ff.
 " " self imposed, 63
 Children, Blake not writing for — in "Experience," 161
 " " tongues" of —, 96
 Chimney Sweeper "The ——" (Innocence), 39, 49, 242
 " " " (Experience), 108, 187, 260, 276
 Chimney sweepers cry, 252
 Christ (drawing of), 240
 " every child for Blake is —, 84
 " died as unbeliever, 178 n.
 " the Divine Essence, 100
 " in "The Divine Image," 205
 " Christian forbearance," 153, 227
 Christianity of "The Lamb" broke down, 183
 " return to, 183
 Chronological order partly discoverable, 48
 Chrysalis, symbol mortality, 123
 " phallic symbol, 123
 Clarke, Dr — ("Blake on the Lord's Prayer"), 147 n.
 Clockwise motion, 127
 Clod & the Pebble, "The ——" 167, 179

Cloud, the --, symbolism of --, 70
 " disappearance of child on, 81, 82
 " " compared Job, 70
 " fiend hid in --, 229
 " in the "Job," 174 f.
 Cockerell, Mr Sydney -- (curator of Fitzwilliam Museum), 49
 Coleridge, 28, 160
 Colouring of Blake's pages, 55, 73, 75
 Colours (Sun-flowers, Rose, Lily), 149
 "Commedia" (Dante), designs to, 57
 Concubine, 30
 Conscious Existence associated with "The Fly," 71
 Contrary States, "the Two --," 161
 Corrosives, medicinal -- (Hell's "Printing House"), 151
 Crabb Robinson (& Lamb), 48
 " " (education), 106
 "Cradle" & "arrow," significance of, 128
 Cradle song ("The Blossom"), 125
 Cradle Song, "A ----," in Innocence, 158, 220
 Creation, The Act of (design), 193
 " process of, 192
 " of the Songs, 66
 Creature, "Little --, formed of Joy and Mirth," 124
 Crescent moon, 218
 Crest, spirits in love's --, 127
 Cruelty conferring sanctity on Fear, 177
 Cry, "chimney sweepers --, 252
 " midnight harlots ----, 252

D

"Dacre," the name --, 110 n.
 Damon, Mr Foster, 11, 50, 83, 125 n., 127 n., 131, 181
 " & date of "The Marriage," 141 n.
 " 's book, 51
 Dante, 150 n., 213
 " designs, 57, 59, 143
 Darkness of the womb, 112
 Date of "The Marriage" (Damon), 141 n.
 " " not given, 25 n.
 " "The Gates of Paradise," 57 n.
 " the Tractates, 57 n.
 Daughters, see Albion's -- Beulah --
 Day arises in the East, 267
 Death of body, after --, 182 n.
 " an improvement, 182
 " & resurrection, drama of --, 123
 " of Robert, 34, 184

Death, sleep poetic name for --, 116
 Deceit, 259, 260
 " soft --, 280, 285
 " sown by Night & War, 259
 Deeper meanings to the Songs, 26
 Deletions in MS., 212
 Descending of eternal to earth, 98
 Design representing sleep, 99
 Designs, Dante --, 57, 59, 143
 Desire, enthroned, 270
 " gratified, 270; see also Gratified desire
 Diminutive, Blake as master of the, 213
 Disappearance of child on cloud, 81, 82
 " " " compare "Job," 70
 " of God & Satan, 82
 Disillusionment, 141
 Divine Essence, Christ the --, 100
 " Humanity --, see Humanity
 Divine Image, "A --," etched, but not printed by Blake, 58 n.
 " Image, "The --," 93, 176
 " " Christ in the --, 205
 " " illustration of, 129
 " " (Mercy, Pity, Peace), 225
 Divine Presence, Angel of --, 69
 " " clothing Adam & Eve, 170
 Divine Love & Wisdom (Swedenborg), 57 n.
 Drama of death & resurrection, 123
 Dreaming of dreams, a duty, 110
 Druid sacrifice, 81

E

Earth, Bliss cannot be consummated except on --, 134 n.
 " bound by theological thought, 147
 " eternal descend to --, 98
 " Holy Spirit walking on --, 145
 " Jerusalem in ---- (see Jerusalem), 275
 " regeneration of, 204 & n.
 " the return to --, 103, 107, 119, 120, 200
 " herself is bid return, 145
 Earth's Answer, 237
 " waking, 116
 East, Day arises in the, 267
 "Echoing Green, "The ----," 47
 Eden, Garden of, 161
 " " Jehovah walking in --, 145
 education the great sin, 106
 Ego, the, has done its work, 150
 Eighteen ten (1810) catalogue, additions to the ----, 40

G

- Garden of Eden, 161
 garden-song, 125
 Garden, sex tangle become a ---, 117
 Garnett, Mrs Robert, 51
 Gates of Paradise, "The ---," 47 n., 182, 184, 209,
 269 n., 270 n.
 " " " date of ---, 57 n.
 " " " plate 13, 272
 Generation, "O holy ---" (Image of regenera-
 tion), 111, 114, 204
 generation type of regeneration, 128
 " wisdom of ---, 114
 Genesis, 184 n., 185 n.
 Genius, see Blake's --- & Robert's ---
 genius haunting Blake's steps, 47 n. f.
 " Poetic ---, see Poetic Genius
 "German forged links," 190 & n., 242
 Giotto, 28
 GIRL, "A Little (Ona) Lost," 20 & n., 38, 115, 140,
 178, 260, 261, 266,
 270 n.
 " " " Blake's pamphlet
 " " " in ---, 170
 " " " "Ona" for "Una,"
 165
 Girl, "The Little (Lycia), blossoms into Experience,"
 125
 " " Found, 38 f., 61, 62, 71, 160,
 183 n.
 " " illustrations to ---, 162
 " " illustration of, with a lover, 116
 " " Lost, 38 f., 61, 71, 97 n., 160,
 183 n., 265
 " " " & the imagery of Night, 72
 " " " as fully mature, 160
 Girls & Boys in the Songs, 39
 Girls, "songs of ---," 49
 Gold, "Age of ---," 163
 Golden string, end of ---, 286
 God, we can dwell with always, 109
 " must be experienced, 106
 " Father stands for ---, 161
 God and Man :
 God becoming Man, 128
 " becomes as we are, 144
 " not more than Man, 35
 " " " (humanity adored), 100 n.
 " to Man as Man to Woman, 39
 " is within, 106

- God of Pity, 226
 God & Satan, disappearance of, 82
 God, Sons of ---, 246
 " not taught but experienced, 106
 " Eliphaz' vision of ---, 106 n.
 " two visions of, 147
 God's fatherhood conditional, 109
 Gold, Age of ---, 163
 golden string, end of ---, 286
 Good Man, Blake the ---, 29
 Gore stains mirtle's roots, 232, 239
 Gospel, "The Everlasting ---," 100 n., 283
 Gratified Desire, lineaments of, 276, 285
 " " " wife & (see also
 Desire), 271
 grief, vision and ---, 47
 Growth, bodily, under parental tree, 117
 Guardianship, child under false ---, 105

H

- Hair, "white" or "silver," 109
 "Harlots," 235
 Harlots cry, 252
 Harlots, thieves and ---, 223
 Heaven :
 " create a Heaven in which ---
 In their Own Selfhoods, 166
 "a Heaven in a Wild Flower," 36
 Heaven & Hell, Marriage of - (see Marriage)
 Hecate, The triple, 52
 Hell's "Printing House" (medicinal corrosives), 151
 Hercules Buildings, 210 n.
 Historian dependent on tangible things, 211
 Holiness of Life, 124 n.
 Holy light removes curtains of Night, 232
 Holy Spirit walking on earth, 145
 "Holy Thursday" (S.I.), 44, 63, 278
 " " " (S.E.), 76, 96, 167, 187
 Home (Blake's), Nonconformist, 215
 "Human Abstract," 277
 Human Image, "The ---," 176, 254, 266
 Humanity to be adored (God not more than Man),
 100 n.
 Humanity Divine (Mne Seraphim), Poetic Genius,
 132
 " " planted his Paradise in Brain, 273
 Humility, 177

I

- "I," poems before "Tyger" begin with ---, 212
 Illiterate spelling, 68

Ilium, Iliad, 215
 Illustration to "The Blossom," 128
 " " "Divine Image," 129
 " " "The Fly," 61 n.
 " " "Infant Joy," 128
 " " " (Carey copy), 75
 " phallic --, 157 n.
 Illustrations to Lyca (Little Girl, The), 116, 162
 " of "Night," 129
 " study of the --, 74 f.
 " (unpublished) to Young's "Night Thoughts," 122
 (see also "Job" illustrations)
 Image of regeneration, 111, 114, 117, 204
 " of truth new born, 130
 " (see also "Divine --" "Human --")
 Imagery more concrete as meaning more spiritual,
 112
 Imagery of Night (Little Girl & --), 72
 Images, thinking impossible without (Lavater), 134
 " become metaphors, 155
 Imagination, All Glorious --, 186 n.
 " All Things Exist in --, 181
 "Immortal Man that cannot Die," 34, 182
 Inconsistencies, Blake's --, 31
 Indifference Blake's (to being understood), 21
 Individual & Emanation may be same, 143 n.
 "Infant," "Female" changed to --, 220
 "Infant Joy," 23, 98, 128, 166
 " illustration of, 128
 " " (Carey copy), 75
 Infant joy beautiful (anatomy horrible), 124 n.
 "Infant Sorrow," 166, 167, 239
 " " MS., 174
 Inferno, Purgatorio, & Paradiso, 150
 Ink addit'ns not engraved on plates, 74
 "Innocence," "Auguries of --," 127 n.
 " egotistic, 150
 " basis of Experience, 203
 " Experience crown of --, 203
 " & Experience must change hands, 144
 " parody or supplement of --, 219
 " Songs of --, Introduction to --, 79
 " " (see also Songs of I. & E.)
 " Thoughtless --, 142
 " thwarted, 20
 Inspiration annexed by orthodoxy, 163
 Instantaneous work of poet, 24
 Instinct & Reason, 173
 Interrogation marks, 68
 Introduction to Songs (of Innocence), 79
 " " (Piper as), 61
 Inversions of metaphors, 70 f.

Investigation challenged, 214 n.
 Isaiah lxii. 4 (Beulah), 272 n.
 Islam, "The Revolt of --," 70
 "Island in the Moon," an --, 39 n., 44, 47 n., 96,
 209, 245, 284
 MS. photos of --, 49
 Issues, first -- of Songs of I. & E., 115

J

Jacob Behmen, 150 n.
 Jehovah walking in -- Eden, 145
 "Jerusalem," 41, 83, 95, 113 n., 143 n., 185 n.,
 186 n., 248 n.
 " plates 96 & 99 --, thought discovers
 " "J --" in Earth, 275
 Jesus is -- brotherhood, 167
 Job, book of, 144, 172 n.
 " cloud in the --, 174 f.
 " disappearance of child on cloud compared
 " with --, 70
 " designs compared with the "Piper," 69
 " engravings, 57
 " illustrations, sixth --, 174
 " " ninth --, 106 n.
 " symphony, sonata introduction to, 82
 " worshipping God of this World, 147
 Job's Tree, 82
 Joy, the core of life, 19
 " our essence, 123
 " & Mirth, Little creature formed of --, 124
 " positive, 176
 " (see also "Infant Joy")
 Joys impregnate, 123, 166
 " of morning sweeter than joys of night, 156, 246
 " priest curses fairest --, 179
 Judgment, Vision of Last, 143 n.

K

Keats, 28
 Key (Angel's) is Platonic thought, 109
 Keynes, Mr Geoffrey, 43, 204 n., 245 n., 270 n.
 " " Bibliography, 49
 " MS. minutely reproduced by, 44
 " re Mirth, 233
 " Nonesuch Volumes, 44
 " Pencil Drawings by William Blake (None-
 " such), 213 n.
 " photos of Rossetti MS., 49
 Kid, "The --," 273
 Kingsley's Water Babies, 201

L

- labours of art, 113
 Labyrinth, Satan's ---, 29
 Lacedemonian Instruction, 277
 Lamb (& Crabb Robinson), 48
 "Lamb," "The ---," 49, 94
 " " associated with "The Blossom," 128
 " " Christianity broke down in ---, 183
 " " (& The "Tyger"), 205
 Laocoön, 150 n.
 Laughing Song, 38, 47
 " " in S.I. & S.E., 166
 " " early form of ---, 47 n., 88
 laughter of the gods, 199
 Lavater's "Aphorisms," 57 n.
 " " (the "Eternal Now"), 182
 " " (images necessary for thought), 134
 Laws that forbid --- life, 165
 "Leaves so green," 126
 Liberty of the body (& mind), 236 n.
 " " Song of ---, 183 n.
 Life holy, 124 n.
 Light, holy --- removes curtains of night, 232
 Lilies (Roses &) associated with bodily & spiritual love & beauty, 253
 "Lilly," the ---, 253, 260
 Lilly white, the ---, 244
 Lindsay, Mr J., 27, 43 n.
 Lineaments of Gratified Desire (see "Gratified")
 Linnel, "Four Zoas" MS. given to ---, 41
 Lion, British ---, 244
 "London," 187, 241, 252
 " " MS. of, 190
 Lord's Prayer, "Blake on ---" (Dr Clarke), 147 n.
 Los, 150
 " " Book of ---, 165 n.
 " " Enitharmon as wife of ---, 272
 Lost:
 "A Little BOY ---" } see "Boy"
 "The Little Boy ---" }
 "A Little GIRL ---" } see "Girl"
 "The Little Girl ---" }
 (see also "Found")
 lost and found, the Mother ---, 93
 LOVE:
 Nought loves another as itself, 263
 Love, bank of ---, 269
 " --- blind, 259
 " Epic & Lyric, 215

- Love, & instinct, 216
 " & marriage (Blake's theories on), 168
 " wakening pangs of ---, 118 & n.
 " cannot be sanctified by "Religion," 152
 Love thought winged, 126
 (see also Sex-love, . . . Selfish love)
 Lover, illustration of Little Girl with ---, 116
 Love's crest ---, 127
 "Lyca" (see the Little Girl)
 Lyric love & Epic love, 215
 Lyrical Poems, Edition 1905 (Dr Sampson), 44, 49

M

- Macgeorge copy (Songs of I. & E.), 75
 Madness, Blake's, 42 f., 43 n.
 Magnificat of "Infant Joy," 123
 maiden, angelic vision to man, 126
 maiden queen, 279, 284
 male element represented by birds, 126
 Malkin, Mr, 193
 " " version of "Tyger," 196
 "Man exist but by Brotherhood," 186 n.
 " " adjoined to Man by his Emanative portion, 143 n.
 Man and God:
 God becoming Man, 128
 " " not more than Man, 100 n.
 Man to Woman as God to Man, 39
 Man, "The Immortal ---," 34, 182
 " " in Resurrection changes sexual Garments at will, 158 n.
 " " World of ---, 254
 Man's Earth, 254
 MS., "The Angel ---," 279, 284
 " Blake's ---, his workshop, 42
 " version of "A Little BOY," 172 n.
 " deletions in ---, 212
 " right selections from --- (Songs of Experience are ---), 286
 " of "Four Zoas" given to Linnel, 41
 " of "Infant Sorrow," 174
 " of "Island in the Moon" (photos), 49
 " minutely reproduced by Keynes, 44
 " of "London," 190
 " Pickering ---, 269 n.
 " Rossetti ---, 209
 " " (Keynes' photos), 49
 MSS., Blake's ---, 40 ff.
 Many, "The One & the Many" (Ellis), 85
 Margin between Time & Eternity, 81

Marriage, Blake & ---, 29 ff.
 " Blake's theories on ---, 168
 " childless, 60
 " convention, 221
 " hearse, 261
 Marriage of Heaven & Hell, "The ---", 163, 165,
 173 f., 179
 " " " date of (Damon), 141 n.
 " " " not dated, 25 n.
 " " " later than the Songs, 50
 Marriage Ring, "The ---", 185 n., 266, 267, 268
 Material things not for soul of man, 124
 " world symbolised by water, etc., 70 f.
 Meanings, deeper ---, in Songs, 26
 "Measure for Measure," 194
 Medicinal corrosives (Hell's "Printing House"), 151
 Mercy, Eternal, 94
 Mercy, Pity, Peace (Divine Image), 225 f.
 " " " (Human Image), 254
 Merlin's prophecy, 261, 265
 Metaphor, symbolical, 23 & n.
 " symbolism little removed from, 69
 Metaphors, Images become ---, 155
 " inversion of ---, 70 f.
 Michel Angelo, 28
 Midnight harlots cry, 252
 "Milton," 41, 265
 Miltonic principle, 39
 Mind, womb compared to ---, 273
 Mirth & Joy, Little creature formed of ---, 124
 Mirtle, 231, 239, 259
 " Keynes re ---, 233
 " Plowman, " 233, 239
 " "To my ---", 262
 " Shade, "in a ---", 141
 Miscarriage, tragedy of ---, 135
 "Mne Seraphim" as Humanity Divine (Poetic
 Genius), 132
 Modernity, Blake's, 19
 Moment, trap the --- before it is ripe, 271
 Monosyllables, 62
 Moon, crescent ---, 218
 Moon, "An Island in the ---", 39 n., 44, 47 n.,
 96, 209, 245, 284
 " " " photos of MS., 49
 Morn :
 --- opening morn
 Image of truth new born, 130
 Morning, joys of ---, 156, 246
 Morning, Night & --- (see Night ---)
 Mortality, chrysalis symbol of ---, 123
 Mother, the, lost and found ---, 93
 Mother-love, sex-love and ---, 184

Motto to the Songs of Innocence and of Experience,
 39, 140, 282
 Mountains symbolising "Reason," 71
 Museum (*British Museum*)
 Museum copy composite, 55 n., 73
 Music to which Songs were sung, 23
 Musician an Architect, 150
 "My" the magic word, 126
 Mystery, 255

N

"Naked beauty displayed," 33
 Name "Tirzah," biblical, 183 n.
 Names, grave meaning of --- for Blake, 92 n.
 " significance of ---, 123
 Naturalism, transference from --- to symbolism,
 97 n.
 Nature, Blake and ---, 265
 " Wordsworth and ---, 88
 " Providence in realms of lower ---, 93
 " gentle thoughts preside over, 118
 " & the Time process symbolised by the Ser-
 pent, 223
 " womb of ---, 249
 Neptune, courting ---, 265
 New quality in Blake's genius, 213
 "Night," 72 & n.
 " illustrations of, 129
 " imagery of --- (Lyca & ---), 72
 Night, curtains of, 232
 " joys of ---, 156, 246
 " "livelong ---", a court of paradise, 99
 Night & Morning symbolical, 71 f.
 "Night Thoughts" (Young's), 213
 " " " unpublished illustra-
 tions to ---, 122
 Night & War sow - Deceit, 259
 "Nobodaddy," 196, 243, 244, 246, 258
 Nonconformist home (Blake's), 215
 "Nonesuch" Blake (see also Keynes), 43 n., 44
 " text not final, 49
 North, symbolic of the underworld, 133 n.
 Nought loves another as itself, 263
 "Now," the Eternal --- (Lavater), 182, 272
 Nurses Song (S.I.), 245
 Nucleus of Book (The "Tyger"), 191 n.

O

Occult Philosophy, "Agrippa's ---", 132
 Ohio, The ---, 188, 229

"Ona" (A Little GIRL, *q.v.*), 178
 "Ona" for "Una," 165
 One and the Many, "the ---" (Ellia), 85
 Order of the Songs, 101, 114, 166
 " " Blake's own ---, 48
 " " (chronological) partly discover-
 able, 48
 " " experimental & artistic, 48
 " " sometimes expository, 48
 Orthodoxy annexes Inspiration, 163

P

Paine, Tom, 161 n., 178 n. f., 266
 pamphlet, Blake's -- in "A Little GIRL lost,"
 170
 Paracelsus, 150 n.
 Paradise planted in Brain (Humanity Divine),
 273
 " " "The Gates of ---," 47 n., 182, 184, 209,
 269 n., 270 n.
 " " " date of, 57 n.
 " " " "Plate 13," 272
 "Paradise Lost," designs, 275 n.
 "Paradiso" (Dante's), designs to, 59
 " " Inferno, Purgatorio, ---, 150
 Parental stem, cherub seated on, 127
 " " tree, bodily growth under, 117
 Parody or supplement of "Innocence," 219
 Parson, answer to ---, 277
 Passage songs, 61, 125
 Passions represented by beasts of prey, 116
 " " wild beasts, 129
 Peace established on fear, 177
 Peace, soldier loves ---, 253, 255
 (see also "Mercy, Pity, Peace")
 "Pebble & the Clod," the ---, 167, 179
 Pencil Drawings by William Blake (Nonesuch),
 Keynes, 213 n.
 Personal element, 188
 Persons (1st, 2nd, & 3rd ---), 150
 Phallic illustration (4 Zoas), 157 n.
 " " symbol (chrysalis), 123
 " " "whip," 248 n.
 Phallus, 125
 Philosophy, Agrippa's Occult, 132
 " " Blake's, 19
 Photographs of Rossetti MS. (Keynes), 49
 Pickering MS., 269 n.
 Pictures poems, & poems pictures (Blake's), 96

Pictures & poems equally express ideas, 25
 Pilgrim's Progress, 272 n.
 "Piper, The ---," 125, 150, 237, 248
 " " as Introduction to Songs, 61
 " " "Job" designs compared with,
 69
 " " symbolical meaning of, 79, 83
 Pity, God of --- (see also "Mercy, Pity, Peace"),
 226
 Plates, ink additions not engraved on ---, 74
 " " colouring of -- by Blake & his wife, 73
 " " etching of, 73
 " " deterioration of ---, 74
 " " Nos. "96," "99," Jerusalem, 275
 Platonic thought, 109
 " " Angel's key, 109
 Plowman, Max, 183 n., 189, 266, 270 n.
 " " re mirtle, 233, 239
 Plutonic rocks, 192
 Poems pictures, & pictures poems (Blake's) (see also
 Pictures), 96
 Poems, etching of, 47
 " " before Tyger begin with "I," 212
 Poet: "A Poet, a Painter, a Musician, an Archi-
 tect ---," 150
 Poetic Genius (Humanity Divine), Mne Seraphim,
 132
 Poetical Sketches, 44 n., 47, 87, 152, 169
 " " unrevised, 40
 Poetry, Allegory hidden, Sublime ---, 128
 Poet's work done instantaneously, 24
 Poison Tree, "A ---," 59, 227
 Pompilia, 287
 "Prelude" (Wordsworth), book II, 106
 " " book V, 107
 Presence, Divine -- (see Divine)
 present, past & future, 145
 prey, beasts of (see Beasts)
 priest curses fairest joys, 179
 " " loves war -- soldier peace, 253, 255
 priesthood symbolised by Serpent, 222
 Printing House, "Hell's ---," 151
 Problems unanswerable, 94
 Prolific -- & Devourer (The Marriage), 173
 Prophecies, Blake's greater, 22 f.
 prophetic indignation (Blake), 168
 prose lines, 108
 Proverb, "an ancient ---" 261, 285
 Providence in the realms of lower nature, 93
 Prussia, 242
 Prussian Militarism, 190 n.
 published work, few repetitions in, 42, 196
 Purgatorio: Inferno --- Paradiso, 150

Q

- "Quest" (article by J. H. Wicksteed in -), 43 n.
 Question Answered, 276
 Questions unanswered, 94
 " several --- answered, 285

R

- "Real Blake" (Ellis), 135 n.
 Reason, 162
 " the abstracting power, 176
 " the Age of ---, 178 n.
 " Instinct & ---, 173
 " half awakenings of the flesh and the half
 light of ---, 178
 " symbolised by stone & mountains, 71
 Regeneration of Earth, 204 & n.
 " (generation as type of), 128
 " "Image of ---", 111, 114, 117, 204
 (see also Image and Regeneration)
 Rejection of error, 106 n.
 Religion cannot sanctify Love, 152
 Repetitions in published works are few, 42, 196 n.
 Responsibility, social -, note of ---, in Songs,
 101
 Resurrection, Butterfly, symbol of -, 123
 " drama of Death and ---, 123
 " "Man changes sexual garments at
 will in ---, 158 n.
 Return to Christianity, 183
 "Return to Earth," the -, 103, 107, 119, 120,
 200
 " (Earth herself is bid -), 145
 Returns to first thought (Blake), 193
 Revolt of Islam, 70
 Revolution, French -, 40, 242
 Rhyme scheme, 201
 Rhymes, obvious --- not avoided, 64
 " bad, 65
 " (unrhymed lines), 122
 Riches, Mr T. H. -, 49, 73
 Riches, verse on -, 277
 Right & Left symbolism, 37
 Ring (see "The Marriage Ring")
 Robert Blake, 32 ff.
 " and Blake, 113
 " his genius, its effect on Blake, 33 f.
 " death of -, 34, 184
 Robinson (see Crabb Robinson)
 Rocks, plutonic -, 192
 Rocky Shore (Albion's), 51, 81, 204

- ROSE TREE, "my pretty ---" (see also Sick
 Rose), 30 n., 139, 141
 Roses & Lilies (bodily & spiritual love & beauty),
 253
 Rossetti, D. G. (& MS.), 209
 " MS. (Mr Keynes' photos of), 49
 Roots (mistle's) stained by gore, 232, 239

S

- Sabbath contemplation, 195
 Sacrifice, Druid ---, 81
 Sampson, Dr -, 40, 43, 108, 209, 266
 " Edition of *Lyrical Poems* (1905), 44, 49
 Sanctity conferred on fear, 177
 Satan, disappearance of God & ---, 82
 " triumphing over Eve, 228
 " Satan's Labyrinth," 29
 " School Boy," the -, 38, 61 f., 187
 " " a type, 188
 Second person, Vision in the -, 150
 Secret Place, --- female Tabernacle, 222 n.
 Selections from MS. of *Songs of Experience* (right
 selection), 286
 "Selfhoods":
 ("... all shall be pure & holy
 In their Own Selfhoods."—Jerusalem), 166
 "Selfish loves," 177
 Selincourt, Mr Basil de -, 31 n.
 Sensual enjoyment, "an improvement of ---," 173
 Seraphim, "Mne ---, Humanity Divine (Poetic
 Genius), 132
 Serpent symbolises Nature & the Time process, 223
 " in the night, 232
 " symbolises Priesthood, 222
 Seven (the age), 117
 " (the number), 119
 Sex-love symbolised by wild beasts, 71
 " represented by flowers, 151
 " & Mother-love, 184
 Sex tangle becomes a garden ---, 117
 Sexual garments changed at will, 158
 Shakespeare, 35, 150 n.
 " Sonnet, 85
 Shelley, 28, 30
 " & the Revolt of Islam, 70
 Shepherd, "The ---," 166 n.
 " The Good ---, 85
 Shore (see Albion's ---)
 Sick Rose, the ---, 258, 265
 Sickie, the -, 270
 Significance of names, 123

- Sketches (see Poetical Sketches)
- Sleep, design representing ---, 99
- " - budding maturity, 116
- " meaning of ---, 116
- " oblivion of the flesh, 116
- " poetic name for death, 116
- Slept -, "I slept in the dark," 243, 252
- Sloss & Wallis, Messrs ---, 50, 272 n.
- Slow motion picture, 24
- Snow, "soft Snow," 261, 265
- Snowy day, I walked abroad on a -, 260
- Social note, 189
- " responsibility, note of -- in the Songs, 101
- " Songs, "The ----," 142
- Soft snow (see Snow)
- Soldier loves peace, 253, 255
- Sonata, introduction to "Job" symphony, 82
- song :
- cradle song, 125, 158
- " " in Innocence, 220
- garden song, 125
- Laughing song, 38, 47
- " " early form of, 47 n., 88
- Song of Liberty, 183 n.
- Nurse's song, 245
- the wild flower's song, 243, 257
- Songs :
- "happy songs," 127
- passage songs, 61, 125
- The social songs, 142
- "Songs of Boys," "Songs of Thought," "Songs of Girls," "Songs of Love," 49
- Songs of Innocence, introduction to ----, 79
- " " mostly simple, 72
- Songs of Innocence and of Experience :
- Songs, the, Blake's own copy of, 189 n.
- " " Boys & Girls in -, 39
- " " many copies made, 74
- " " " used to light fires, 74
- " " creation of, 66
- " " in 1893 Edition (Ellis), 50
- " " of I. & E., first issues, 115
- " " "The Marriage," later than, 50
- " " have deeper meanings, 26
- " " of I. & E. Motto to, 39, 140
- " " "music to which sung, 23
- " " "order of, 101, 114, 166
- " " "Blake's own, 48
- " " "Piper as Introduction to, 61
- " " note of social responsibility in, 101
- " " Titles of, 58
- " " lose their spirit in print, 72
- Sonnet, Shakespeare ---, 85
- Sons of God, "The ---," 246
- Sorrow (see "Infant Sorrow")
- Sorrows bring forth, 124, 166
- Soul not distinct from body, 128, 151
- " of Man, material things not for ---, 124
- Souls of men bought & sold, 255, 256
- Southern wild, 111
- Sparrows --- arrows, 268
- Spelling illiterate, 68
- Spirit, Holy ---, walking on earth, 145
- Spirit of Songs lost in print, 72 f.
- Spiritual body, raised a ----, 186
- Spiritual meaning - concrete imagery, 112
- "Stains (mistle's) roots" - "gore ---," 232, 239
- States, the "Two Contrary ---," 161
- "Stems of Vegetation" (see also Paternal Stem), 112
- Stone symbolising Reason, 71
- String, - end of golden ---, 286
- Study of the illustrations, 74 f.
- Sty, 262, 274
- Sublime Poetry, Allegory hidden ---, 128
- Sun, 149
- Sun-flower, "Ah ----," 160, 167, 217
- Sun rise, Eternity's ----, 271, 285
- supplement (parody or ---) of "Innocence," 219
- Swedenborg, 28, 140 n., 150 n.
- " 's Divine Love & Wisdom, 57 n.
- Sweeper (see "Chimney Sweeper")
- sweepers cry, 252
- "sweep sweep," 108
- Swinburne, 270 n.
- sword, The ---, 270
- syllables :
- monosyllables, 62
- three syllabled words, 62
- four " " 63
- Symbolical metaphor, 23 & n.
- symbolisation of :
- animal life by vegetable life, 70 f.
- material world by water &c., 70 f.
- Reason by stone & mountains, 70 f.
- sex-love by wild beasts, 71
- Nature & Time process by Serpent, 223
- Priesthood by Serpent, 222
- Symbolism, Blake's, 36
- " " water in ---, 51
- " " of blossom & of flowers, 122 & n.
- " " of cloud, 70, 174, f.
- " " developed from Twofold Vision, 36
- " " Right & Left, 37
- " " little removed from metaphor, 69

- Symbolism, transference from - to naturalism, 97 n.
 " of Night & Morning, 71 f.
 " of the Piper, 79, 83
 symbols :
 butterfly-resurrection, 123
 chrysalis-mortality, 123
 " -phallic, 123
 Symphony (Job), Sonata introduction to -, 82

T

- Tangible things, historian dependent upon, 211
 Teaching v. experiencing God, 106
 Tear becomes Babe in Eternity, 127 n., 273
 Text of "Nonesuch" not final, 49
 Texts of pages coloured, 55
 Thames and Ohio, 188, 229
 "The" and "A" in Blake's titles, 58
 Thel, 272 n.
 " Book of, 185
 " " (Luvah), 183 n.
 Thel's scepticism, 131
 Theme -- earth's waking, 116
 Theological thought binds earth, 147
 Thieves and harlots, 223
 Thinking impossible without images (Lavater), 134
 Third person, 150
 Thirteenth century (Blake if born in), 27
 Thought, 263
 " Archaic, frankness of -, 125
 " discovers Jerusalem in earth, 275
 " first returns to --- (Blake), 193
 " "Songs of ---", 49
 " (theological) binds earth, 147
 Thoughtless Innocence, 142
 Thoughts gentle -- preside over nature, 118
 Three syllabled words, 62
 Threefold Vision, 32, 269
 Thursday, Holy ---, 44, 63, 278
 " " (S. E.), 76, 96, 167, 187
 Time & Eternity, margin between ---, 81
 " process, 184
 " symbolised by Serpent, 223
 Tirzah, name biblical, 183 n.
 Tirzah, "To ---", 111, 140, 160, 168, 172, 179, 258
 " " not in Carey copy, 183
 Titles to Songs of I. & E., 58
 Titles (Blake's), "A" & "The" in -, 58
 " Block Capitals in, 69
 Tongues of children, 96

- Tower, the -, 193
 Tractates, date of ----, 57 n.
 Tragedy of birth, 123
 " of miscarriage, 135
 Transference from naturalism to symbolism, 97 n.
 Trap the moment before it is ripe, 271
 Traveller, 217
 Tree (see Job's Tree, Parental Tree, Poison Tree, Rose Tree, etc.)
 Trilogy, 167
 Truth, Image of -- new born, 130
 Two visions of God, 147
 Twofold Vision, 18 f., 35, 134
 " " Symbolism developed from, 36
 "Tyger," the, 17, 48, 52, 59, 97 & n., 116, 141, 156, 246, 250, 284
 " " contains no answers, 94
 " " Malkin's version of -, 196
 " " (& the Lamb), 205
 " " nucleus of Bqok, 191
 " " a symbol, 100
 " " poems before -- begin with "I," 212

U

- "Una," "Ona for ---", 165
 Unbeliever, Christ died as, 178 n. f.
 Underworld, North symbolical of, 133 n.
 Unpublished illustrations to Young's "Night Thoughts," 122
 "Unizen," 186 n.

V

- Vagabond, The little (pretty), 274
 Vegetable life representing animal life, 71
 Vegetated mortal Wife, Emanation becomes ----, 42
 Vegetation, "Stems of ---", 112
 Version of "Tyger" (Malkin's), 196
 Virgins, 261, 262
 Virginites, 261
 Vision : Eliphaz' Vision of God, 106 n.
 Vision and grief, 47
 " of Last Judgment, 143 n.
 " in the second person, 150
 " threefold --, 32, 269
 " twofold --, 35, 134
 " " Symbolism developed from, 36

- Visions of Daughters of Albion, 161 n., 257
 " of God, two -----, 147
 " located (Blake's), 35
 Voice of the Ancient Bard, 62, 189 n.

W

- Wallis & Sloss, Messrs, 50, 272 n.
 War of American Independence, 242
 " (Night & --), sow-Deceit, 259
 " priest loves --, 253, 255
 " Water Babies" (Kingsley), 201
 Water in Blake's symbolism, 51
 " symbolising material world, 70 f.
 Whip, "Phallic --", 248 n.
 White, the late Mr W. A. -, of Brooklyn, and family,
 49
 Wicksteed, Joseph, 127 n.
 " " (article in "Quest"), 43 n.
 Wife:
 Emanation yet his Wife, 143 n., 272
 Emanation becomes vegetated mortal Wife, 42
 Wife & the lineaments of Gratified desire, 271
 Wild animals, 97
 " beasts symbolise sex-love, 71
 " " represent passions, 129
 " (see also Beasts)
 Wild Flower, a Heaven in a ----, 36
 Wild flowers song, "The --", 243, 257
 "William Bond," 135 n., 269 n.
 Wilson, Miss Mona -, 82 n., 160 n.
 Wind, fury of my --, 228
 Window into Eternity, 34
 Winged love-thought, 126
 Wings, 98 n.
 " Angel has butterfly wings, 123
 " of butterfly, 126

- Winter, the --, 260 & f.
 " represents the Father, 261
 Wisdom synonym for Experience, 142
 " of generation, 114
 Wise, Eternal ever present to the ----, 113, 182
 Within:
 What is above is within, 69, 100
 God is within, 106
 within and without, 202
 Wollstonecraft, Mary --, 161 n., 266
 Woman's relation to Man (as Man's to God), 39
 Womb, 204
 " darkness of the, 112
 " compared to mind, 273
 " of Nature, 249
 " - helpless ---- worm In ----, 123 n.
 Words (see Syllable (3 syllable, 4 syllable, etc.))
 Wordsworth, 35, 48, 88, 106, 107, 117, 174
 " (Blake & --), 27 f.
 " Dorothy, 48 n.
 " & Nature, 88
 Workshop, Blake's MS. his --, 42
 World of Man, 254
 Worm, helpless ---- In ---- womb, 123 n.

Y

- Young's "Night Thoughts," 213
 " " " unpublished illustrations to, 122

Z

- Zoas, "Four ----," 113 n.
 " " incomplete, 41
 " " MS. given to Linnel, 41
 " " phallic illustration, 157 n.

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